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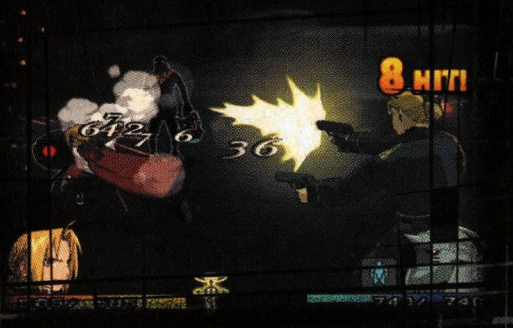


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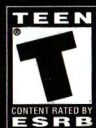
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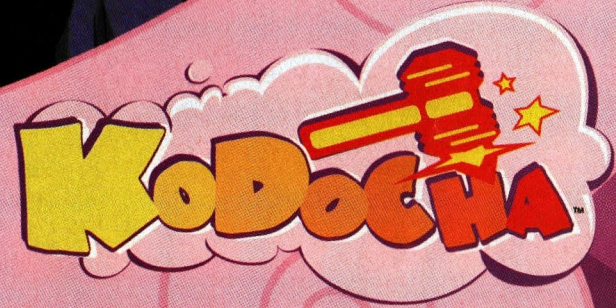
うや

# 1 Motor 2 Mouth 3 Mayhem こどもおもちゃのスーパースター



School Girl Super Star  
**August 2nd**  
 From the Director of Fruits Basket®

Sana Kurata is one of the stars in the hit series, "Child's Toy," which broadcasts every afternoon. It would appear her life is charmed, and free of worry and regret. However, Sana's life isn't all it's cracked up to be. There's the constant strain of filming a television series, commercials, and even movies. Her award-winning novelist mother wants her to succeed, and she has a strange relationship with her Agent, Rei. Then there is her arch enemy, Akito Hayama. Akito and his gang of hooligans are at it again, wreaking havoc in the classroom. But has Sana discovered because secret weakness? Sana had better be cautious because when she acts on her plan, the consequences aren't exactly what she expected!



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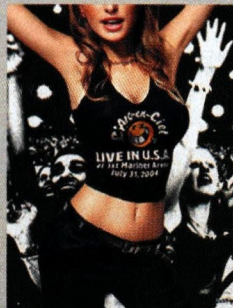
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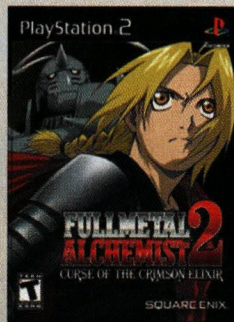
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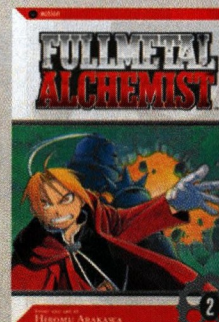
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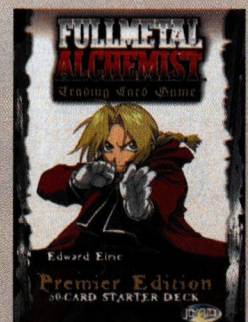
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# contents 誌のご内容

ANIME INSIDER #22 • JULY 2005



## 52 Features

### 34 NINJA POWERED

*Naruto* is going to be the biggest show on the planet; this is your indispensable preview to the phenomenon. **By the A.I. Staff**

### 42 THE LADIES' MAN

An exclusive *Anime Insider* interview with Akitaro Daichi, the director of *Kodocha* and *Fruits Basket*! **By Robert Bricken**

### 52 ANCIENT HISTORY

The dark and foreboding past of your *Samurai Champloo* heroes. **By Christian Yee**

### 54 THE FAN-TASTIC WORLD OF OTAKU

A guide to the hilarious (and hilariously frightening) world of anime fandom, courtesy of *Genshiken*. **By Zac Bertschy**

### 56 DEATH WISH

The 10 anime characters we'd just love to see dead. **By Bamboo Dong**

### 58 THE FORGING OF FAFNER

Director Nobuyoshi Habara sits down with *Anime Insider* to unearth the secrets behind *Fafner*! **By Summer Mullins**



42



66

## Departments

### 10 FROM THE TOP

### 12 ANIMAIL

### 16 A.I. NEWS

### 28 A.I. FIVE

Panda-Z

### 30 FLASH IN JAPAN

Die Buster

### 32 LAST MAN STANDING

Sesshomaru vs. Sephiroth

### 66 DVD

*Hellsing* rises from the dead

### 72 TELEVISION

How TV anime is really doing

### 74 MANGA

Talking with Range Murata

### 80 THEATRICAL

Makoto Shinkai's latest flick

### 82 MUSIC

Puffy AmiYumi's new tour

### 84 VIDEO GAMES

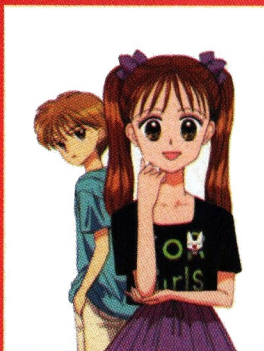
All the anime games of E3

### 90 STUFF

### 94 J-LIFE

### 96 PARTING SHOT

## ON THE COVER



Excited for anime's next big sensation, *Naruto*? So are we, and we just couldn't resist putting the spunky ninja's mug on our cover; if you're eager to know more about the show, just flip on over to page 34! If ninjas don't float your boat, share the spotlight with *Kodocha*'s Sana and Akito by hearing what director Akitaro Daichi has to say on page 42.

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# fromthetop 無恥陳列

## Notice anything...different about us?



**MEETING OF THE MINDS** To the A.I. staffers' dismay, Editor Robert Bricken favors his new hire, Lum-chan.

**H**ello there. I'm editor Robert Bricken, and I'd like to be the first to welcome you to the new *Anime Insider*. I'd also like to apologize—I'm very sorry it took us this long to go monthly. The problem with being bi-monthly (besides watching associate editors/lazy jerks Zac Bertschy and Summer Mullins sleep at their desks every other month) is that there was always so much awesome anime news going on that we could never fit it all in the magazine. And now we can.

You'll notice a few changes, though—including the look. *Anime Insider* has always prided itself on being the anime magazine for all anime fans—boy or girl, young or old, newbie or terrifyingly obsessed otaku—and we think our new design reflects this. All the regular sections have been overhauled as well, and you'll also find two brand-spanking new departments: "Music" on page 82 and "J-Life" on 94. While I'm pretty

sure "Music" is self-explanatory, we thought you might like to know what your brethren overseas are up to—hence "J-Life," news about the otaku lifestyle and youth culture right out of Japan.

Now, I don't ask a lot of you readers, but please write us at our snazzy new email address—[Anime-Insider@wizarduniverse.com](mailto:Anime-Insider@wizarduniverse.com)—and let us know how we did. And since I'm asking, buy five copies of every issue of *Anime Insider* for yourself, and three each for your friends and loved ones.

**Robert Bricken**  
Editor

## MEET THE PRESS Our rejected re-design ideas



**ANDREW KARDON**  
Executive Editor

Scratch and sniff pages! Just imagine the delicate aroma of rice balls as you read a *Fruits Basket* feature. Although the dusty book smell from *R.O.D.* probably wouldn't be great for my allergies.



**SUMMER MULLINS**  
Associate Editor

A six-page section devoted to Haro, the ubiquitous and rotund Gundam universe mascot. I was less enthusiastic about it after Andrew revealed that *Anime Insider* would not expense the bill for my Haro tattoo.



**ZAC BERTSCHY**  
Associate Editor

I can't believe they shot down my ideas! Every great makeover needs a new spoiler, spinning rims, TV sets in the headrests and a totally bangin' neon *Anime Insider* logo in the rear windshield! Philistines.



**ANDREZ BERGEN**  
Tokyo Correspondent

I have this hunch that Tokyo sits slap-bang on some screwed up feng shui nexus point. So I suggested A.I. pay for me to become an onmyoji in order to investigate. Really, I just wanted to wear the hat.

## MASTHEAD

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*Anime Insider*, volume one, issue twenty-two (22), July 2005.

Please direct all editorial-related inquiries to *Anime Insider* Editorial Dept., c/o Wizard Entertainment Group, 151 Wells Avenue, Congers, NY 10920-2064 or fax (845) 268-3562. Please direct all subscription-related inquiries to *Anime Insider* Subscription Dept., P.O. Box 762, Shrub Oak, NY 10588. Twelve-issue subscription rate is \$36.00 (Canada \$72.00, all other countries \$80.00). All payments in U.S. funds only.

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*Anime Insider* (ISSN 1547-3787) is published monthly by Gareb Shamus Enterprises Inc., 151 Wells Avenue, Congers, NY 10920. Periodicals postage paid at Congers, NY and additional mailing offices. Additional A mail enclosed, USPS Number: 021-731.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to *Anime Insider* c/o Wizard Entertainment Group, P.O. Box 762, Shrub Oak, NY 10588.

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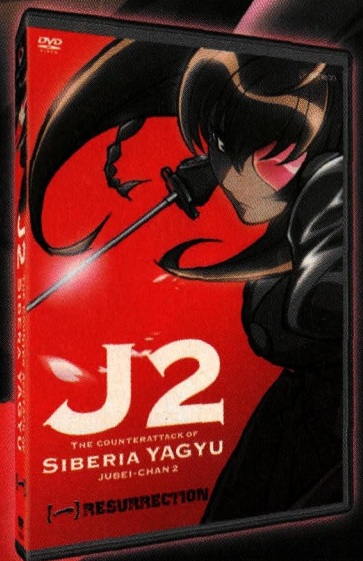
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## WORKAHOLIC

**G**reetings, anime fans! Zac Bertschy here, and I just can't get my head around this whole "monthly" thing. *Anime Insider* has always been bi-monthly, which meant that the editorial staff at the AI offices got to spend a whole month relaxing in hammocks, sipping root beer and watching cartoons before having to actually work on the magazine. Now we have to do this every month! Just think; that's twice as many issues, which means 100 percent more mail for me to answer. What does this mean for you? Well, keep those letters coming. I need twice as much mail now, folks, so get writing! Snap to it! No slacking!



'ANIMAIL' SURE IS WINDY TODAY.



KAGOME AND INUYASHA

## MAKING MUSIC

My friends and I are all big J-rock fans and we were wondering if there would ever be a segment in *Anime Insider* about J-rock bands like Miyavi or L'Arc~en~Ciel? That would be totally awesome!

Nikki F.  
Via cyberspace

Great timing, Nikki! The issue you're holding in your hands is not only the most exciting issue of the magazine we've ever produced, it also has two brand new departments—Music and J-Life! Flip on over to page 82 for our spankin' new Music department, which covers J-pop, J-rock and all those anime soundtracks I keep blowing my paycheck on.

"There's so much music, and so many artists out there to enjoy!" says the president of Tofu Records, Yaz Noya.

"The U.S. audience deserves to get as much information about Japanese music as possible, and where better to get that than *Anime Insider*?"

It's the overwhelming amount of mail we got from fans like you who made that happen (and the hostage situation we had with associate editor/resident hardcore music fan Summer Mullins, who put an *Anime Insider* J-music department in her list of demands).

## TOTALLY FRUITY

I have two questions.

Why is it that *Fruits Basket* by Natsuki Takaya is never mentioned in *Anime Insider*?

Also, is it true that Inuyasha and Kagome get married?

Savannah Woodworth  
Seabrook, TX

Ah, I see you hail from a crazy alternate dimension, complete with a bizarro version of *Anime Insider* that never mentions one of the most popular anime and manga series of the past three years!

All kidding aside, Savannah, I chained hard-working intern "Fighting" Joe Straatmann to his desk and made him find out just how many times we've mentioned *Fruits Basket* in every issue since 2001. His wearied response? We've mentioned it 18 times over the past 20 issues and at least twice in every issue since *Anime Insider* #17. In fact, it was one of the covers for issue #11. Double in fact, it's a favorite around here at the office and we put it in the magazine all the time. Just look a little harder next time!

To answer your second question, no, Inuyasha and Kagome never get married. Kagome has a whirlwind relationship with TV's Patrick Duffy (who you may remember from *Step By Step*!), and her romance with Inuyasha never recovers.

## MONKEY ON MY MIND

I just saw the new Saiyuki movie, *Requiem*, and I loved it! Sadly though, the new movie marked the end of the whole series! That still didn't stop me from falling in love with one of the main characters. His name is Goku—he's the 300-year old Monkey King and he doesn't look a day over 13!

His English voice is done by Greg Ayres. Could you guys show a picture of him?

Jeanette Ferguson  
Tampa, FL

I have good news and bad news for you, Jeanette. The good news—the Saiyuki movie, *Requiem*, is not the end of the story by a long shot. In fact, it's a side story that really didn't have much to do with the TV series at all! There are two other full-length Saiyuki series, *Reload* and *Reload Gunlock*, the first of which is being released on DVD by Geneon as we speak. When's the second one coming out? I asked Paul Armstrong, publicist for Geneon. "Geneon looks forward to releasing Saiyuki *Reload Gunlock* in 2006, shortly after *Reload* wraps up," said Armstrong.

As for Mr. Ayres, he's actually one of the hardest-working voice actors out there today. You can hear him in a whole lot of ADV series, including *Gantz*, *Chrono Crusade* and *Cromartie High School*.

The bad news—unfortunately, Greg doesn't reprise his role in *Reload* or *Reload Gunlock*, so keep that in mind. Also, I'm pretty sure that in your state it's illegal to have feelings like that towards primates. Especially underage ones.





## CRYING WOLF

I really love *Wolf's Rain*, it's my favorite anime. I was wondering if they're going to make another season, though?

Chelsea A.  
Gore, VA

*You know, I get a lot of mail on this topic. People always want a second season of something even if everyone in the show died a horrible, explosive death at the end and they'd have to resort to lame Dallas-style "it was all a dream!" tactics to resurrect the show. And nobody wants that, do they?*

*The problem with a *Wolf's Rain* sequel (and one of the things that made the show genius) is that—oh, total SPOILER WARNING, by the way—in the final episode, Kiba resets the world and everything starts over. Hige, Toboe and Tsume are all alive again, living their separate lives, and the very last shot is the same shot of Kiba's foot hitting the puddle that appears in the opening credits. The idea is that the entire series starts over again and it's all a big loop; were they to remain faithful to the original storyline, the second season would be exactly the same as the first. Get it?*

## GENDER BENDER

1. I heard that the Japanese version of *Rurouni Kenshin*'s main character, Kenshin Himura, is played by a female! Is that true?

2. Also, is Kino of *Kino's Journey* really female? Kino looks and sounds and acts like a boy. It seems so unbelievable to me!

Michelle Truhn  
Hallett, OK

*1. You are correct! Kenshin is played by a female seiyuu named Mayo Suzukaze who was famous for playing male and female characters in a*

*Japanese acting troupe before landing the Kenshin gig. Really, it's not that big a deal; happens all the time in Japan, especially with boys. In the Japanese version of *Steamboy*, the lead, a young English lad named Ray Steam, was voiced by female voice actress Anne Suzuki. For that matter, even in the English version, Ray was played by actress Anna Paquin! It's standard practice, Michelle. Even *Fullmetal Alchemist*'s Ed Elric is voiced by a woman (Romi Paku) in the Japanese dub.*

*2. I had the same question about Kino's*

*Journey, but it's revealed on the first DVD that Kino is, in fact, female. I'd be willing to wager that she has a hard time getting the "cute girl discount" at her local bar, though.*

## DOG DAY AFTERNOON

I have two questions. I know you can answer them, because you're awesome!

The first question is this: in the Japanese version of *Inuyasha*, does Sango always call Miroku "hoshi-sama"? Why does she call him that and what does it mean? Also, what kind of dog is Inuyasha?

Adrienne Tollas  
Creston, B.C., Canada

*You're not going to believe this, Adrienne.*

*This answer is going to blow your mind.*

*"Hoshi-sama" is a very polite way of saying "priest." Amazing, isn't it? I mean, how often do you get incredible insight and amazing wisdom like this in a magazine letters column?*

*Also, Inuyasha is a demon dog. I'm fairly sure Rumiko Takahashi has never specified his breed. If I had to hazard a guess, I'd say...oh, I don't know, Jack Russell Terrier?*

## BIRD CAGE

I'm a die-hard *Cowboy Bebop* fan and my favorite episode was episode five, when Spike and Vicious meet up at the church with Faye being held captive. My question is, when Spike and Vicious start fighting, and Vicious throws Spike out the window and Spike tosses a grenade back in, who sings the song that plays when Spike is falling? I think it's the most beautiful song ever!

Luke Watson  
Denham Springs, CA

# BACKTALK



**Thanks for the *Ghost in the Shell: SAC 2nd Gig* preview! I'm a huge fan of the original and it really made my day. Now if only it were September already!**

Daniel Kelter  
Brooklyn, NY

**Thanks for the *Naruto* news but I'm pretty sure they're gonna have to cut it all up to make it "suitable for kids." *Naruto* isn't only for children!**

Krissy Satworth  
Via cyberspace

**I can't believe your *Last Man Standing*! You finally did Vash versus Spike and nobody won?! C'mon, everyone knows Vash would take Spike down.**

Pedro Martinez  
Santa Monica, CA

**That *Last Man Standing* was nonsense and you should all be ashamed of yourselves. Spike would have won that fight and no way would Faye have messed up that badly.**

Lauren James  
Via cyberspace

**I'd say I loved your last issue, but really I just loved that centerfold you had from *Burst Angel*. Sweet!**

Jeremy Snyder  
Corpus Christi, TX

**I'm a huge *Hellsing* fan and I think *Trinity Blood* looks really cool! Thanks for the sneak peek!**

Stacy Peterson  
Via cyberspace

**I really wish you guys would have more extensive coverage of manga. I mean, manga's really popular, so why not have more of it in the magazine?**

Brad Jung  
Sarasota, FL

**OK, I read this issue 15 times and I really didn't see nearly enough *Saiyuki* coverage! Where's the love for my favorite anime ever and the best anime of all time?!**

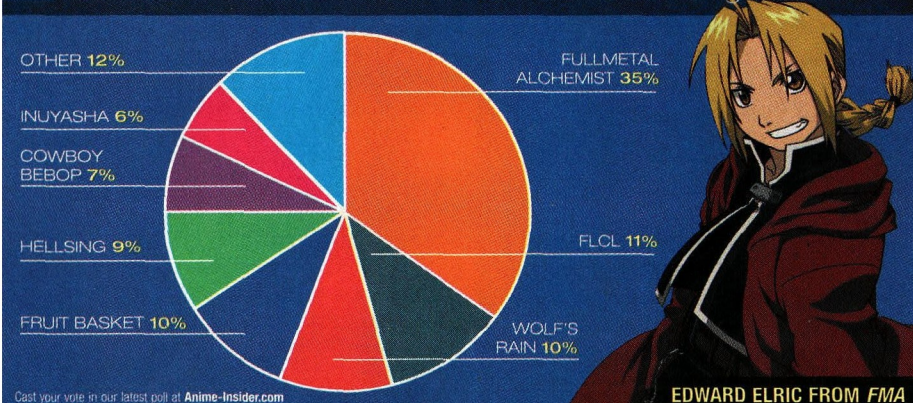
Nancy Lorne  
El Paso, TX

**You cast Harry Potter as Ed Elric in a *Fullmetal Alchemist* movie? What were you guys thinking? Besides looking like a total goofball, he's got a British accent!**

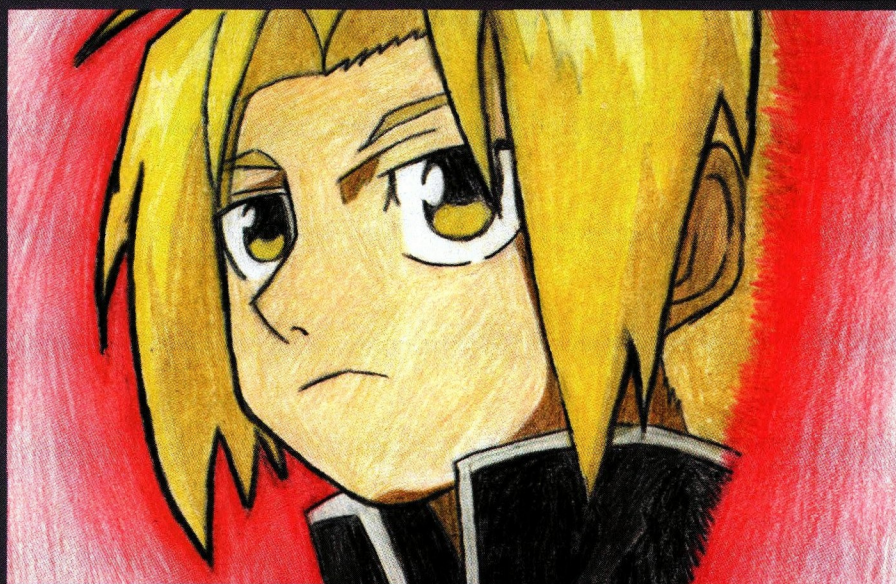
Keith Osiewicz  
San Francisco, CA

# WEBPOLL

Which series has the best English dub?







**EDWARD ELRIC** Michelle Chen, Sugarland, TX



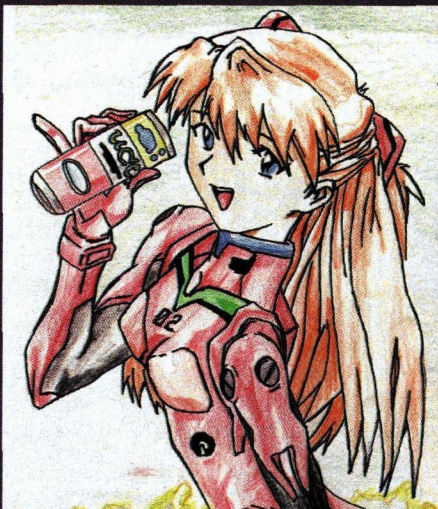
**NAUSICAA**  
Abner Ravela, Baldwin Park, CA



**DEJIKO**  
Jessica Cowgill, Grandview, WA



**ED**  
Chris Grenard, Canon City, CO



**ASUKA LANGLEY SOHRYU**  
Danny Palm, Sawtell, NSW, Australia

Good question, Luke! I love that song too. In fact, Editor Robert Bricken loves it so much he played that song at his wedding instead of the usual tune they play at those things. He didn't tell his wife, though, so when it started playing, she punched him in the gut. I thought it was pretty funny, myself, but Rob's wife's grandmother looked a little upset.

The song, called Green Bird, is sung by master songstress Gabriela Robin. Robin also sung the vocals for the track Cats on Mars, which can be found on the album Cowboy Bebop: No Disc.

## DEATH WISH

I heard from a website that Adult Swim is planning on ending *Inuyasha* this September! How do they expect me to live without Sesshomaru and Koga?! Can you tell me if this is true?!

Sofia Toloune  
Woodbridge, VA

Oh, Sofia. The Internet is not your friend. It will lie to you and tell you all kinds of crazy stories because it wants attention, but don't give in! Turn your back on the Internet; it'll only hurt you in the end.

*Inuyasha* ended its Japanese television run back in September 2004. A lot of fans on Ye Olde Internet caught wind of this and thought that the show would be ending its American run in September. Not true. In fact, new episodes started airing on Adult Swim this past May 28, starting with episode 102. Since there are 167 episodes of *Inuyasha* total, you've got more than an entire year's worth of brand spankin' new *Inuyasha* adventures! So put down the knife, stop panicking, and turn the TV on.

Everything's going to be all right.

## THE METAL EDGE

I'm a big fan of anime; I've been watching it since I was a child. But I've also grown up with heavy metal, too! Instead of lullabies, I got Bon Jovi and AC/DC. Now I'm in high school, and I still watch anime, but I also like to go to concerts like Slipknot and Lamb of God. So my dilemma is, how can I live a heavy metal and anime lifestyle? They don't mix too well! I've got friends who listen to the Murder Dolls and also friends who watch *Inuyasha*. Can you help me?

Kou Keisha  
Via cyberspace

Let me start this one out by explaining that Bon Jovi can in no way be classified as heavy metal. Neither heavy, nor metal. It's something you listen to at the dentist's office.

That said, I'm not sure what the problem here is. My advice? Walk into a Hot Topic store and buy a Slipknot shirt and an *Inuyasha* messenger bag. Congratulations, you're living an "anime and heavy metal lifestyle!"

Still, if you're trying to bridge the gap, there are plenty of hard rockin' anime out there. Try Geneon's *Black Heaven*, about an ex-rock star who saves the world with his guitar. It's quite good.



FAYE VALENTINE FROM  
COWBOY BEBOP



36...  
HUHE...37...  
GRUNTE...  
38...

## REMIX RAGE

In issue #20, you had an article on *Cowboy Bebop* and it talked about the new series that's coming out this summer called *Cowboy Bebop Remix*. It sounds pretty good from what I've heard and I'll probably buy it. But I have one little question. Are Lin, Shin and Vicious in it? My friend and I are desperate to know!

Jessie K.  
Via Cyberspace

*Let me be the first to thank you, Jessie, for allowing me to squash this misconception before I get another eight hundred million emails about it.*

*Cowboy Bebop Remix is not, I repeat, not a new series. It's the same Bebop you've seen over and over again on Adult Swim and it's the same one you might already own on DVD. The episodes are remastered, and there are a boatload of new special features (including a new 5.1 Dolby Surround audio track), but it isn't a new series.*

*There. Now I can go back to answering the other eight hundred million emails I get about second seasons of Hellsing and Fruits Basket.*

## TIMELINE TROUBLE

I love the show *Fullmetal Alchemist* but there's something I don't get. If the show is set in the 1900s, how come Edward Elric has that crazy futuristic automail arm, and yet there aren't any televisions or radios or anything? What's going on?

Brandon A. Harper  
Via cyberspace

*Here's the thing—Fullmetal Alchemist is a fantasy show. It's set*

*in a fantastical version of Earth in the 1900s. You may have noticed that the characters in Fullmetal Alchemist spit fire from their hands and turn rocks into cannons just by drawing a circle on the ground, which as far as I know wasn't possible in the real 1900s. Also, there are in fact radios; there's a radio in the very first episode, which Ed and Al fix with alchemy. I'm not sure the point of Fullmetal Alchemist was to recreate a historically accurate version of the 1900s. If it was, then boy, did they ever mess up! According to my sources, everyone on the show, including the women, should be sporting a top hat, a huge handlebar moustache and a monocle. Everyone looked like that guy from the Monopoly game back then.*

*Well, that's all for this month. Now I can get back to my hammock and my root beer!*

*Wait, what? There's another Animail due in 30 days? ...Nuts.* **ai**

—Zac Bertschy

*Associate Editor Zac Bertschy's hammock is crafted entirely from the shoelaces he steals from small children and old people.*

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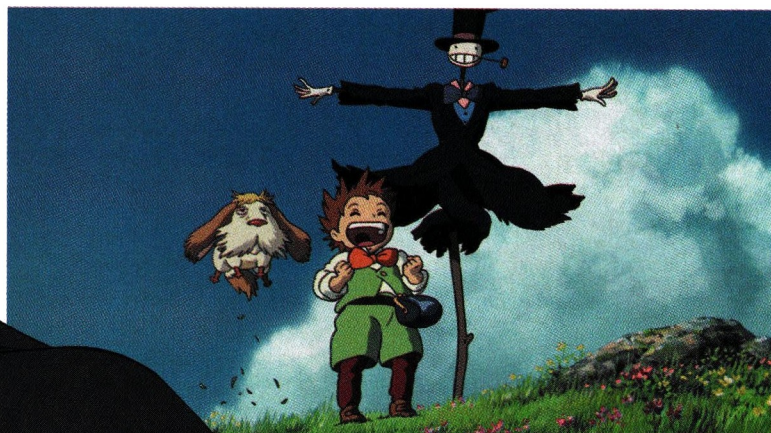
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**YOUNG AT HEART** Will Sophie (left) become Hollywood's next darling? Maybe, but she won't be appearing in *Maxim*.

## MOVING ON UP

**'Howl's Moving Castle' lumbers to America...and success?**

It may be propelled by spindly chicken legs, but *Howl's Moving Castle* still has an awful lot riding on it. Since January, *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, *Steamboy* and *Appleseed* have all come and gone from theaters, with only \$1.6 million—combined—to show for it. Theatrically released anime looks to have a dire future unless *Howl's* comes through.

Luckily, *Howl's* has several things going for it—and the first 20 are Hayao Miyazaki himself. The renowned anime maker hasn't had a single miss since he directed his first feature-length film *Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind* in 1984 with Studio Ghibli. His most recent film (other than *Howl's*), *Spirited Away*, made an impressive \$10 million, and netted him an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature. *Howl's* has already taken Japan by storm, setting box office records and grossing over \$200 million dollars in Japan, and has won numerous awards there and at film festivals worldwide. But will the rest of America embrace *Howl's*?

They will if Disney and Pixar have their way, as those two mega-animation companies have helped create the English-language version of the film, which will be released on June 10 in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco and then make its way nationwide. Disney plans to release *Howl's* in over 700 theaters—an impressive change from *Spirited Away*, which only made 26 theaters in its initial run, and an additional 600+ several months later, after it won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature. *Howl's* will actually be the largest release for an anime movie—excepting the *Pokémon* and *Digimon* films. And for many, it's about time.

"I'm just a big fan of Miyazaki. He does amazing work that I've admired for years. A lot of us here at Pixar feel that way," said Pete Docter, the director of *Monsters, Inc.* and the man responsible for the English adaptation of *Howl's Moving Castle*. "I've always liked his films. The cool thing about his stuff is that it's such strong, strong films

that he does and yet they're very unlike films that we do, in the sort of traditional Western structure of storytelling. There's something about his that he just taps into that weird dream sense that everything seems to work in some weird way."

Docter, working closely with Pixar head John Lasseter and a crew of Disney animators as well, took on the challenge of adapting *Howl's* into English. That challenge was perhaps a little easier than in the past, since *Howl's* is actually based on a children's novel by British author Diana Wynne Jones.

The story of Sophie, an 18-year-old young woman who is cursed by the Witch of the Waste and transformed into an old woman, *Howl's Moving Castle* is a study of perception and love, with the underlying theme of the need to look beyond the surface into the soul to find the real person. In her journey to transform back into a teenager once again, Sophie must brave the mysterious moving castle of Howl, a wizard with a scary reputation. If she





## BEARLY LEGAL

Amazing panda knows how to drive stick-shift  
Page 28



## SON SITS

Shinji's father ignores another Father's Day  
Page 56

frees the fire demon Calcifer from his curse, she may set herself free as well.

As Pete Docter explains, this departure for Miyazaki in adapting a book for the screen (he usually creates his own stories for his films) still bears the master animator's unique stamp.

"There are some real differences with the book," Docter said. "Sophie has two sisters in the book and she only has one in the film. Howl's assistant in the castle, Markl, is a tall teenager or young adult kind of character in the book. And in the film he's like an 8-year-old.

that you sort of wouldn't have thought of otherwise," Docter explained.

The vocal talent for the English version includes Americans Lauren Bacall as the nefarious Witch of the Waste, Blythe Danner as the stern Madam Suliman, Jena Malone, and Billy Crystal as the fire spirit Calcifer. They will be joined by British actors Emily Mortimer as the young version of Sophie, Jean Simmons as the old version, and Christian Bale as the unpredictable wizard Howl himself. But despite the original novel being

British, Miyazaki didn't want a British sound to the voices.

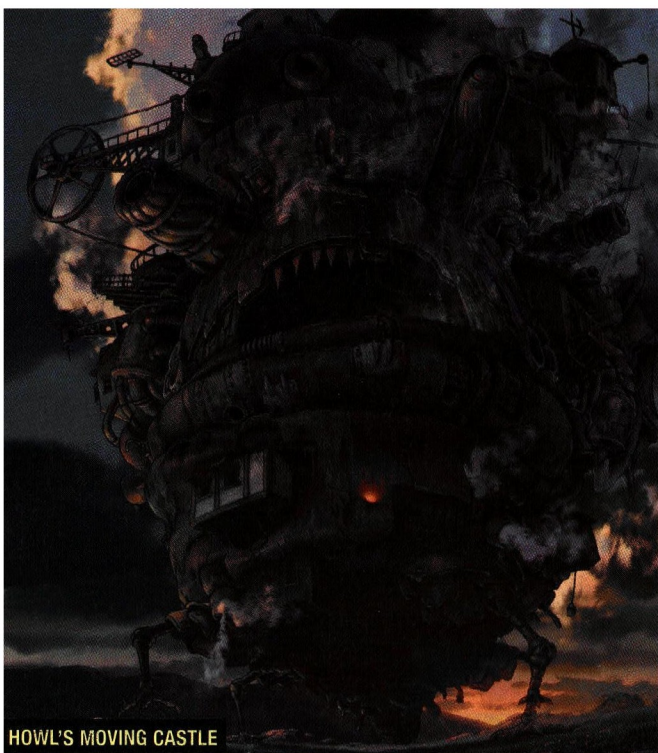
"When we talked to Studio Ghibli about what they wanted, because this is obviously an English book, we asked 'Do you want English-sounding voices?' They said, 'No. No. They should be just American voices,'" Docter commented. "Where we ended up was a Mid-Atlantic accent, where you have a slight feel of the British, but it's not so heavy. And that worked out great with Christian Bale and everyone."

According to Docter, it worked out particularly well with Billy Crystal, who voices Calcifer, the fire demon.

"That was John's idea from the beginning, from the first time that we saw the film. He's much more of a cartoon-character type, and I think that was another liberty that Miyazaki took with the book. In the film, Calcifer's a little more approachable, and that's the humor of him. Billy Crystal as the voice just seems to fit perfectly."

Docter added that while there are no plans for a McDonald's Happy Meal tie-in, Docter and everyone at Pixar and Disney have high hopes for the success of the brilliantly realized film, and for future Miyazaki work being embraced by the general American audience.

"I know more and more people who are interested in anime than ever before. It seems like a growing phenomenon here," Docter said optimistically. "In terms of the future I think that it just kind of remains to be seen and we'll approach that as we get there. John [Lasseter] and Miyazaki have a great relationship and a great admiration for each other's work. So we'll see what happens." ■ Jenny Peters



HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE

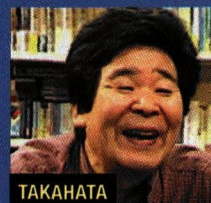
There's a whole added theme of war that wasn't in the book. So he took some pretty big liberties with it and really made it his own. It feels like a Miyazaki film."

Of course, Docter and his teams at both Pixar and Disney necessarily have put their own stamp on the English version of the film. A project shared between the two studios, Docter revealed that the process of bringing Miyazaki's vision to America meant a big collaboration.

"It's definitely been a group thing. For one, [Toy Story director and Spirited Away adapter] John Lasseter would've loved to have been involved more than he was. Any time I could pry him away from his own show, he was more than happy to look at what we were doing, and so he was involved in the casting decisions himself. And the group down at Disney, for the character voices, Ned Lott is a producer and was really responsible for the majority of the casting. He did a great job of pulling together examples to run past us and tracking down people

## MOVING AHEAD

The 'Castle' might be built, but Ghibli's keeping busy



TAKAHATA

Howl's Moving Castle may be the latest animated theatrical film from Studio Ghibli, but it certainly won't be the last.

The studio is currently at work on

three upcoming projects, all of which are early in development and have not yet been officially announced. The first is an adaptation of a Chinese children's novel, *I Lost My Little Boy*. The second will be headed up by Ghibli co-founder Isao Takahata, best known in America for his somber war drama *Grave of the Fireflies*, and the third will be led by Ghibli's other co-founder: Hayao Miyazaki.

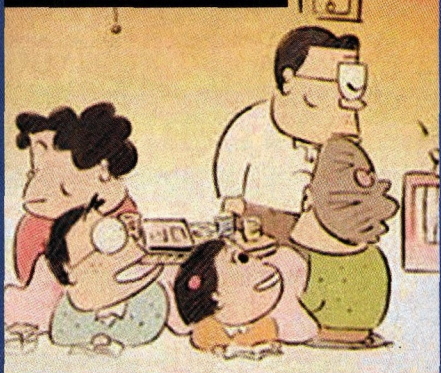
In the more immediate future, Disney has scheduled two Studio Ghibli films by Isao Takahata for U.S. release. The first, *My Neighbors the Yamadas*, is a comic strip



POM POKO

adaptation that follows the lighthearted antics of a Japanese family through a series of short stories, while the second, *Pom Poko*, is an environmental allegory featuring *tanuki*—shape-shifting raccoon-like creatures—faced with the loss of their natural habitat due to suburban development. Long considered by many fans as films that Disney would never release in the U.S. because they are more Japan-centric and less child-friendly in appeal than Miyazaki's works, both titles arrive on August 16, 2005. ■ Daryl Surat

## MY NEIGHBORS THE YAMADAS





# FAIR PLAY

## Sights from the 2005 Tokyo Animation Fair

The Tokyo Animation Fair is all business, but that business is anime. All the major studios and Japanese TV channels promote their shows with booths, mascots and more. Here's a look at some of the highlights from this year's show. ■ *Al staff*



**DAYS OF CHANGE** The Association of Japanese Animations demonstrated the horrors of anime piracy by torturing Astro Boy.



**SITTING PRETTY** A.I. Editor Robert Bricken immediately attracts the fly honeys of Pretty Cure.



**SAND LOT** Naruto's Gaara dressed up for the occasion, but still killed dozens of attendees.



**IRON MEN** Tokyo Correspondent Andrez Bergen mystifies all by sticking his forearm in Tetsujin-28's armpit.

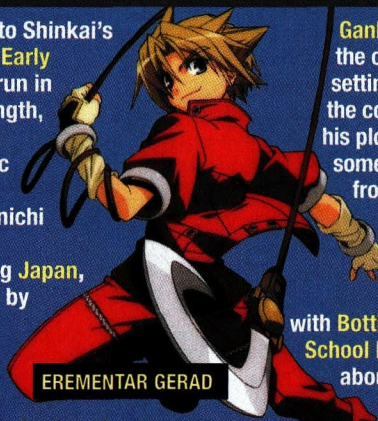


**HOLY MOLEY** Only her divine mercy kept Ah! My Goddess's Belldandy from smiting Bricken.

## COMINGSOON

The latest anime and manga license announcements

- **ADV** is set to release Makoto Shinkai's **The Place Promised in Our Early Days** on DVD after a short run in select theaters. The full-length, sci-fi film about three teenagers dealing with epic problems won the Animation Film Award at the Mainichi Film Concourse in Japan.
- **Dark Horse** will be releasing **Japan**, a tough-guy, action manga by Buronson and Kentarou Miura, the creators of **Berserk** and the splatterfest **Fist of the North Star**.
- **Del Rey** has acquired **Gacha Gacha**, **Ghost Hunt**, **Sugar Sugar Rune** and **Pastel**, a romantic comedy about a high school couple's unusual relationship after tragedy causes them to move in together.
- **FUNimation** announced its acquisition of Gonzo's **Sunabozu** (retitled **Desert Punk**), starring a diminutive bounty hunter trying to survive in a post-apocalyptic world swirling in sand.
- **Geneon** announced **The Count of Monte Cristo**, a.k.a. the visually sumptuous



EREMENTAR GERAD

**Gankutsuou**, a retelling of the classic novel in a sci-fi setting, where Albert meets the count and gets drawn into his plot of revenge. Expect some gorgeous costumes from renowned designer Anna Sui.

• **Geneon** also announced G-rated, sugary cuteness with **Bottle Fairies**; **Doki Doki School Hours**, a zany comedy about a tiny teacher; **Starship Operators**, where

reality shows meet intergalactic warfare; the fantasy epic **Erementar Gerad**; and the sexy, supernatural OVA series, **Ghost Talker's Daydream**.

- **Media Blasters** has licensed **Kakurenbo**. The 24-minute film inspired by creepy folktales and seemingly innocent games will also be made available for download onto the PSP. Media Blasters also has the rights to the film **Aminosa**.
- Gamers and otaku rejoice! **TOKYOPOP** will release the **Kingdom Hearts** manga. The Final Fantasy-meets-Disney videogame has already sold millions of copies worldwide and finally comes to the U.S. in manga form.
- **TOKYOPOP** has also announced a slew of highly anticipated manga including: **Samurai Champloo**, **Mobile Suit Gundam: Ecole du Ciel**, **Spiral**, **Earthian**, **Life**, **Kamikaze**, **Girls Bravo**, **Kamichama Karin**, **Kanpai!** and **Trash**. Also two new man-hwa: **Lights Out** and **Justice and Mercy**.
- The popular manga **Death Note**, about a student who receives the power to kill people by writing down their names, will get a U.S. release from **VIZ Media**. ■ *Abe Chang & Joe Straatmann*



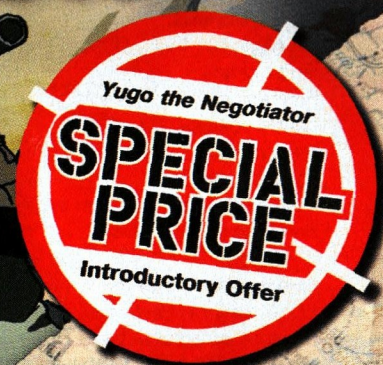
DESERT PUNK



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# TENCHI TALK

## Chatting with the cast—new and old—of 'Tenchi 3'

It's been a long time since anime fans have seen Tenchi Masaki and his harem of hot alien girls, but FUNimation will change that in July when it releases the first DVD of the third *Tenchi Muyo* OVA series. *A.I.* sat down with the new and old voices to commemorate the occasion.

### How does it feel to be working on *Tenchi Muyo* again?

**Sherry Lynn (Sasami):** I was thrilled to work once again on *Tenchi Muyo* after so long. It was my first anime project, and I still feel very close to my character.

**Kate Vogt (Washu):** Fabulous! The director, Scott Page Pagter, is full of fun.

**Rebecca Forstadt (Mihoshi):** It's always exciting to be working on something so popular.

**Jennifer Darling (Ayeka):** It's great being back with the *Tenchi* cast again. Although sometimes it was a challenge remembering Ayeka's relationship to the other characters.

**Matt Miller (Tenchi):** It's like coming home.

### Mona and Kari, are you nervous to join a series as beloved as *Tenchi Muyo*?

**Mona Marshall (Ryoko):** No, this isn't my first time voicing an anime character. I voiced Toboe in *Wolf's Rain*, Izzy and Terriermon in *Digimon* and Plue in *Rave Master*.

**Kari Wahlgren (Noike):** I've voiced an anime character or two as well...Haruko in *FLCL*, Lavie in *Last Exile*, and Robin in *Witch Hunter Robin* seem to be a few of the familiar ones. I didn't know how popular Tenchi was, so I wasn't nervous before. Now, however...

### Is it tough to return to your characters after such a long time?

**Miller (Tenchi):** Not really, the voice came right back and the character fell into place as well.

**Lynn (Sasami):** Not at all. Sasami has always been one of my favorite characters to play...along with Pretty Sammy and her "love baton."

**Forstadt (Mihoshi):** Not really. Her voice is a little bit squeaky which is harder to do every day I breathe in L.A. smog.

**Darling (Ayeka):** It is a challenge—a good

one! It's a great job to be faced with that range of emotions.

### What are your character's odds of winning Tenchi's heart?

**Lynn (Sasami):** Well, Sasami always manages to have him save her...plus she's the only one who knows how to cook!

**Vogt (Washu):** There are no odds; Washu's a done deal.

**Forstadt (Mihoshi):** It may never happen for my character, but Tenchi doesn't know what he's missing.

**Marshall (Ryoko):** I think Ryoko's chances



**MUCHO MUYO** Clockwise from top left: Tenchi, Ayeka, Washu, Sasami, Noike, Mihoshi and Ryoko in the middle.

are slim. Tenchi's heart is attracted elsewhere, and Ryoko may be just a bit too moody for him.

**Wahlgren (Noike):** None, Nada, Zero. Let's face it—if he married Noike, he'd work at some lame, intergalactic desk job to support them, and then he'd suffer a mid-life crisis, eventually turning to the bottle to drown out the sorrow of no longer attracting hordes of hot, exotic women. Sad way to end a series...

**Darling (Ayeka):** Are you kidding? I have no idea. Every minute is a new turn of events in that romance. It's that darn Tenchi—he's so fickle!

### So Matt, which girl would you pick?

**Miller (Tenchi):** I would pick Ryoko—no wait, Ayeka—no wait, Mihoshi—no wait...I'm not sure. ■ *Robert Bricken*

## TOPFIVE

The most anticipated anime in America

**1 NARUTO** No real surprise, eh? Given *Naruto*'s immense popularity, the spunky ninja can't teleport here fast enough for drooling "Narutards." But how will VIZ do with the English adaptation? We'll have to wait until *Naruto* airs this fall to find out.

**2 HELLSING ULTIMATE** The best part about Geneon's new *Hellsing* OVA is that it gives hope to fans everywhere for more of their favorite shows. The worst part is that as of press time, there's nothing even close to a release date, so expect *Ultimate* to stay in the Top 5 for a while.

**3 THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO** Exciting, educational and completely gorgeous—is there anything bad about Geneon's *Count of Monte Cristo*? Well, if you watch too many episodes in a row, the elaborate costume designs might make your eyes bleed. Oh, and that it's not due until October.



**COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO**

**4 KODOCHA** Darn you, FUNimation! You taunt us with the incomparable shojo series *Kodocha*, and then delay it until August? You're just making us anticipate it more! Well, pass the time with our exclusive interview with director Akitaro Daichi on *Kodocha* and more on page 42.

**5 GHOST IN THE SHELL: STAND ALONE COMPLEX 2ND GIG** With the first season a success on Adult Swim, it stands to reason that folks are already hankering for the next adventures of Motoko and Section 9, due (thankfully) this September on Adult Swim, and DVD from Bandai and Manga Entertainment.

■ *Al staff*



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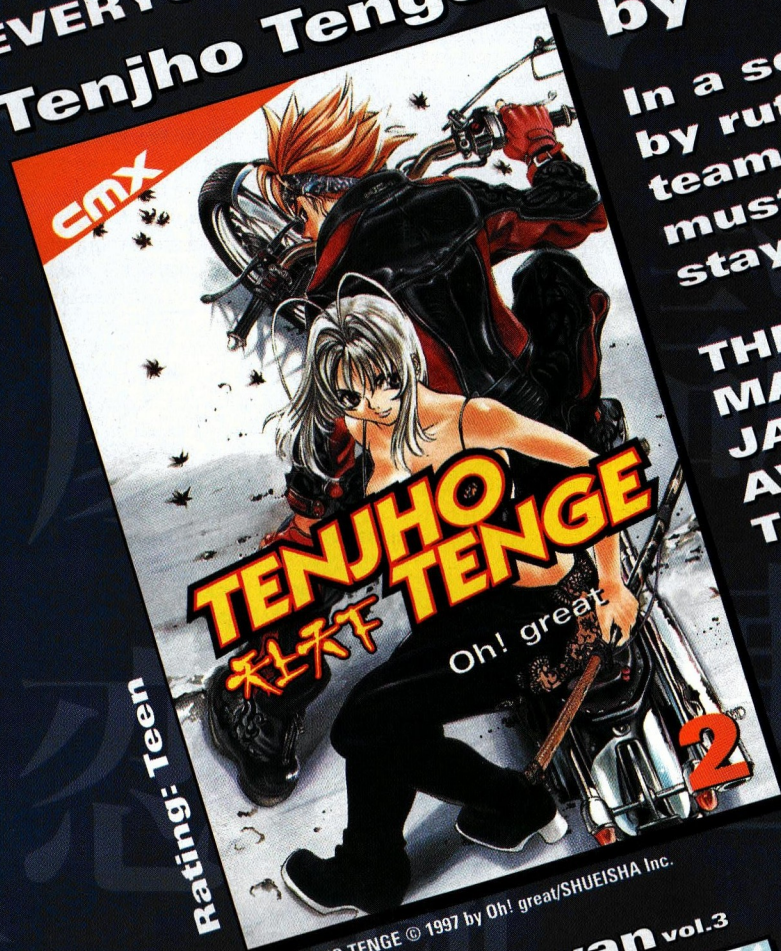
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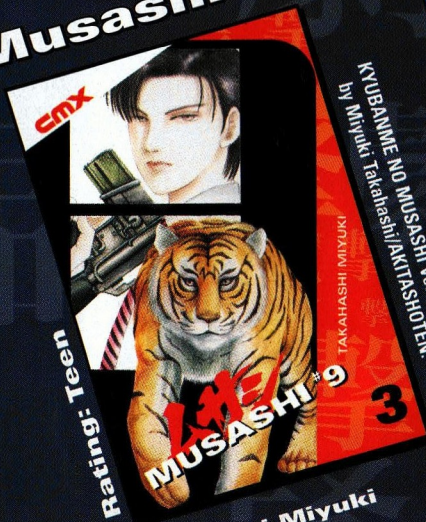
Rating: Teen

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**Gals! vol.2**



Rating: Teen

**Takahashi Miyuki**

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## BY THE NUMBERS

**22,000** Maximum attendees of the 2005 Otakon, Baltimore, Md. anime con now, thanks to their attendance cap

**20,899** Total attendees at the 2004 otakon.

**1,000** Price in yen for a collector's book of new Japanese anime-edition stamps

**89** Rank of VIZ's *Fullmetal Alchemist* manga on *USA Today's* bestseller list on its first week

**889,000** *Fullmetal Alchemist* Web sites found on Google

**75** Millions of dollars more *Pokémon: The First Movie* made than *Spirited Away*

**285** Maximum number of *Naruto* doppelgangers found in a single scene in the first episode of *Naruto*

**19** Anime titles watched by A.I. intern Joe Straatmann and research assistant Miguel Esquivel trying to find this issue's "Death of the Month"

**1,700** Episodes of *Sazae-san*, Japan's longest-running anime series

**36** Number of years *Sazae-san* has been on the air

# WIPE WEDDING

## 'Love Hina' couple Naru and Keitaro finally tie the knot

The Hinata Inn was closed to the public on April 3, but open for love. On that day, as posited at the end of Ken Akamatsu's *Love Hina* manga (which ended in 2003),

*Love Hina's* Keitaro Urashima and Naru Narusegawa were married.

Honored Priest Seda conducted the ceremony; Kitsune, Motoko, Shinobu, and the other *Hina* girls were Naru's bridesmaids. Guests included Kagome Higurashi and Inuyasha, as well as Arsene Lupin and Fujiko Mine, who watched uncomfortably as both Naru and Keitaro actually completed their lifelong promise to each other.

During the first dance, Keitaro lost his balance dancing with Naru; crashing down on the wedding cake. Kitsune and Motoko tried to help him up, but the frosting covering his glasses proved to be too much, as he mistakenly grabbed the girls' dresses. As a gesture of her love, the new Mrs. Urashima only slapped Keitaro instead of punching him clear across Tokyo.

Despite the rocky start to their wedded life, guests wished them well. "Congratulations," Akamatsu told the couple. "You really must not give up, no matter what!" ■  
Tamaryn Tobian



KEITARO AND NARU

## IF IT WERE ANIME

### Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

There's a golden ticket hiding inside a Wonka-san Pocky box that nets the winner a visit to the mysterious Wonka-san candy factory, and when little Bukketto-kun finds one, his whole life is turned upside down!

Led through the factory by the mysterious, enigmatic and downright loopy Wonka-san (and his team of superdeformed Uumpo-Ruumpos), Bukketto-kun and a team of other wide-eyed tykes, along with their disapproving, confused parents, take a whirlwind tour. But as the other kids fail to heed Wonka-san's ominous warnings about the dangers of his candy factory (poor Veluca Enbun winds up transformed into a giant Strawberry gummy), one by one they disappear from sight and it's up to Bukketto-kun to finish the tour and discover the secret of Wonka-san!

Little does he know, the secret is him: Wonka-san reveals that little Bukketto-kun is to be his successor... his life will never be the same again! ■ Zac Bertschy

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID HUTCHINSON



LOVE HINA © KEN AKAMATSU • KODANSHA LOVENINA OSEN KUMAI • TV TOKYO



The **Movie**  
Experience of a Lifetime

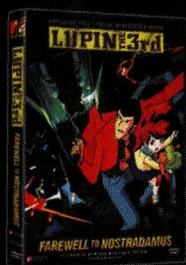
The Future Has Been Foretold...

And it's Full of  
**DANGER**



A bizarre cult known as the Nostradamus Sect believes it can predict the future. If so, their next prophecy will thrust Lupin into a perilous and explosive adventure.

Lupin and his gang must now uncover the truth behind the cult's mysterious powers, discover their connection with a girl kidnapped from a powerful family and steal a priceless diamond in the ultimate race against time.



Fight the future with Lupin in **Farewell to Nostradamus**  
The action-packed movie experience comes to DVD June 28, 2005.

Extras 5.1 Surround Sound, Detailed Character Profiles,  
Q&A: Who was Nostradamus?, Japanese/English Subtitles

**LUPIN the 3rd**

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# AFRO-LICIOUS

Sam Jackson learns the way of the 'Afro Samurai'

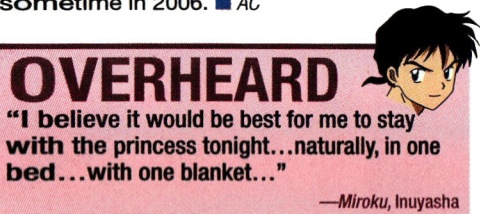
**A**fro Samurai may not carry a lightsaber, but the new anime series will have one thing in common with Star Wars—Samuel L. Jackson. The star of *Pulp Fiction* and *Shaft* adds another sword-wielding badass to his résumé by lending his vocal talents to the Gonzo (*Hellsing*, *Last*

*Exile*) anime series. Jackson voices Afro—a samurai hell-bent on avenging the death of his father. Based on artist Takashi "Bob" Okazaki's character, *Afro Samurai* is set in a futuristic world with feudal elements and hip-hop beats.

Gonzo, working in conjunction with Fuji Television and Spike TV (the cable network that will also air the series), plans to have the show ready to slice and dice the airwaves sometime in 2006. ■ AC



AFRO SAMURAI



## OVERHEARD

"I believe it would be best for me to stay with the princess tonight...naturally, in one bed...with one blanket..."

—Miroku, *Inuyasha*

# DEATH OF THE MONTH

## Hal from *Texhnolyze*

It's all fun and games until somebody loses an eye—and their life—in *Texhnolyze*! Hal loves Yoko and Yoko loves Shinji, but Shinji couldn't care less about her. A rift forms between the three best friends, and sullen Hal ditches their Racan gang for the Shapes gang. When they inevitably clash, Hal's body's been replaced with a more-powerful cyborg one, but the suit doesn't make the man—after Yoko distracts Hal with a chair smashed across his back, Shinji jabs his finger into Hal's unprotected eye socket, pushing the eyeball right into his brain. Too bad Hal's new body didn't include a pair of sunglasses. ■ Miguel A.L. Esquivel



# GRATUITOUS FANSERVICE



## BAN MIDO (*GetBackers*)

Ban might have an evil eye, but there's nothing evil about his body. He keeps in good shape by retrieving items semi-professionally with his partner Ginji, as well as posing for highly suggestive pictures with him.



## MAYA NATSUME (*Tenjiho Tenge*)

Frankly, we had a hard time picking between the two voluptuous Natsume sisters for this inaugural "Gratuitous Fanservice," but the elder sister Maya won for being a bit more powerful—and single, since Aya's hot for Nagi.

AFRO SAMURAI © TAKASHI OKAZAKI / GUN. GETBACKERS © YUYA AOKI • RANDO AVAMINE • KODANSHA/TEAM GETBACKERS. INUYASHA © RUMIKO TAKAHASHI / SHOGAKUKAN • YOMIURI TV • SUMISE 2000. TENJIHO TENGE © OH! GREAT • SHUEISHA / ANI. TEXHNOLYZE © RYUJI KUBO • TEXHNOLYZE COMMITTEE.



**A BATTLE 1000 YEARS IN THE MAKING IS ABOUT TO UNFOLD!**

# **ZATCHBEL!**

## **THE CARD BATTLE**



**MASTER THE SPELL-BOOK!**





## IRON MADE-IN

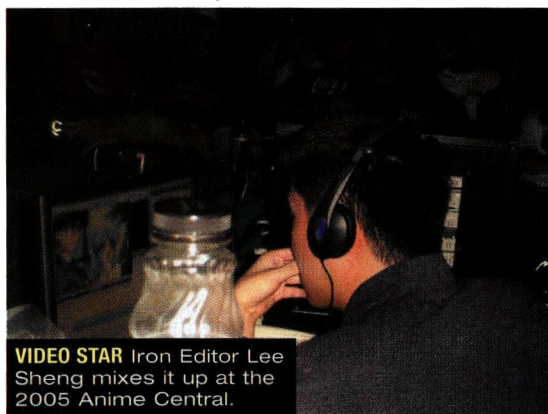
### Anime music video artists mix it up live in 'Iron Editor'

The heat is on—it's just you, an MP3, and three hours of random anime footage. You've got to whip up an anime music video about a theme that's just been handed to

visiting Anime Central and Fanime. Of course, traveling shows need handy equipment—and in a competition like this, that's no easy task. Every last computer chip has to be identical so that

differences in the editing machines don't give either Iron Editor an unfair advantage. So Bohnet, together with new Iron Editor coordinator Omar Jenkins, convinced Otakorp (the non-profit corporation that runs Otakon) to assemble identical computers specifically for the event. "Without Otakorp's help," said Jenkins, "finding a company to supply equipment for each convention would have been a logistical nightmare."

But now the only nightmares are those of video editors who have to sweat about matching on-screen mouth flaps to English lyrics. While most Iron Editor events run for two or



**VIDEO STAR** Iron Editor Lee Sheng mixes it up at the 2005 Anime Central.

you—along with a "secret ingredient"—a clip from an anime so painfully awful and obscure even the dorkiest otaku would cringe.

That's the premise behind the "Iron Editor" challenges, which have been delighting con attendees for years. The original Iron Editor competition began in 2001 at Anime Weekend Atlanta, and it was an instant hit. The show took to the road under the direction of Patrick Bohnet,

three hours, the staff keeps it interesting for the audience with live entertainment, wacky judges and technical explanations of each editor's technique.

This year, you'll be able to catch the Iron Editor Challenge at Baltimore's Otakon in August, as well as Anime Weekend Atlanta in September and at Anime USA in Tyson's Corner, Va., this November. ■ Dan Barry

## COSPLAYTIME

### Sango from *Inuyasha* by Rachel Robbins

She might not have had an improbably large boomerang, but we'll credit the young Rachel Robbins for having a spot-on Sango costume at Wizard World Los Angeles this past March. *Inuyasha*'s demon-hunting gal pal told us *Anime Insider* is her favorite magazine—and we're always happy to show off a satisfied customer. Think you can play dress-up as well as Ms. Robbins can? Then send your pic to:

COSPLAYTIME, c/o *Anime Insider*, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY, 10920—or email 'em (hi-res, please) to anime-insider@wizarduniverse.com.



## CONJOB

### ANIME EXPO

July 1-4, Anaheim, CA

Hiroshi Ousaka (the *Fullmetal Alchemist* movie), Kazue Yamamoto (*Angel Feathers*), and Maaya Sakamoto (*Wolf's Rain*) will be headlining this immensely popular con. Anime Expo will also feature AX Idol, a contest where fans can win a chance to be a singer or voice actor in an anime series! [www.anime-expo.org](http://www.anime-expo.org)



WOLF'S RAIN

### CONNECTICON

July 15-17, Hartford, CT

Voice actors, company representatives, and other members of the anime industry combine with comic artists, science fiction fans, and musicians at this multi-genre convention. [www.connecticon.org](http://www.connecticon.org)

### IKASUCON

July 15-17, Cincinnati, OH

Fan favorites Jan Scott-Frazier, Scott Ayres, and Steve Bennett will all make an appearance at this Midwest convention, which will host a concoction of crazy events as well. [www.ikasucon.org](http://www.ikasucon.org)

### TOKONATSU

July 22-24, Woburn, United Kingdom

Anime fans in jolly old England can enjoy this mostly outdoor convention where attendees are organized into different houses that compete against each other in a variety of games. [www.tokonatsu.org.uk](http://www.tokonatsu.org.uk)

### NARUTOCON

July 29-31, Pasadena, CA

Music, panels and a ramen relay contest will help you get into a *Naruto* frenzy at this three-day event dedicated to everyone's favorite hand-stabbing ninja! [www.narutocon.net](http://www.narutocon.net) ■ JS



From Legendary Creator Leiji Matsumoto (Star Blazers, Captain Herlock, Galaxy Express 999, Interstella 5555)  
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# 5 reasons you'll love PANDA-Z

BY TAMARYN TOBIAN

**S**ome people think pandas are an endangered species, but they've obviously never seen *Panda-Z*. After all, a panda piloting a giant, panda-shaped robot armed with flying rocket fists and missiles isn't too endangered—even if it's required to fight the nefarious forces of Warunimals.

Such is life for Pan-Taron, the young pilot of *Panda-Z*. He happens to be the grandson of Dr. Pan-Ji, creator of the *Panda-Z*. The pair live at the aptly named *Panda-Z* Institute on an island inhabited by other animal robots, including cute nurse Rabina, telephone-headed Denwan and more. All would be well if the evil Warunimals, led by the semi-diabolical Skullpander, didn't want *Panda-Z*'s Super P-Z engine—and didn't send their giant, animal-themed mecha after it at every opportunity. Hamsters, wolves, mice and a disturbingly attractive bunny—Pan-Taron will have to face all of them before his island is safe.

While you've probably seen the mountain of *Panda-Z* merchandise at your local anime convention, Bandai will give you a chance to see the hilarious anime in July when it releases the 30-episode series (at five minutes per episode, they're short but exceedingly sweet) this July. If just looking at the panda-y goodness hasn't convinced you, here are five other reasons why you need to watch *Panda-Z*.

have watched an episode of a mecha show will find *Panda-Z* familiar and hilarious. And fans new to the genre will simply find it hilarious.

## 2. BECAUSE SILENCE IS GOLDEN

No arguments about subs or dubs here—*Panda-Z* is utterly silent. There's not a single voice actor who works on the show; instead, just like those old-time silent films from Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, dialogue happens through caption cards—regular conversations and screams of frustration alike. Watching the evil Skullpander villains get enraged, but forced to make their threats over caption cards somehow only adds to the *Panda-Z* hilarity.

## 3. IT'LL ROCK YOUR SOCKS OFF

Okay, when we say it's utterly silent, we aren't talking about the music, which rocks—hard. The robo-panda action is set to the heaviest guitar Japan can crank out, thanks to the JAM Project, short for Japanese Animationsong Makers. They also provided the theme song for the popular *Scrapped Princess* series. You'll be tempted to put in the DVD to rock out to, long after you're done watching *Panda-Z*. If you're dying for some speech, don't miss *Panda-Z*'s opening theme

song *Voyager*, which features bizarre lyrics happily screamed in English.

## 4. PANDAS ARE THE CUTEST ANIMALS EVER

That's not so much an opinion as a statement of fact. Pandas are cute, these hyper-stylized pandas are cuter, and giant robot pandas are the cutest. Whether blank-faced (which is standard) or enraged, these little bears and animals are frighteningly adorable. Even the nefarious minions of Skullpander are diabolically adorable. If you don't believe us, believe the merchandise. Action figures, gashapon, keychains, school supplies, plushes, finger puppets—mountains of Pan-Tarons and *Panda-Z*s were sold even before the anime premiered, thanks to character designer Shuichi Oshida's design.

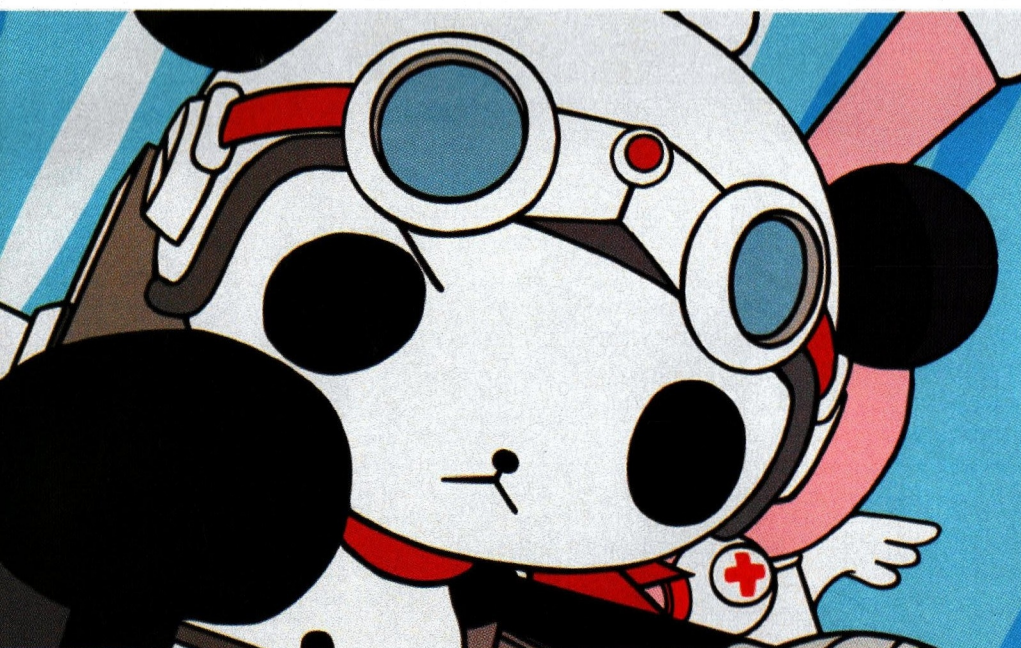
## 5. IT BRIDGES THE AGE GAP

It's often hard for one generation to understand the other, and *Panda-Z* is no exception. Pan-Taron has plenty of uncontrolled teenage angst; Dr. Pan-Ji

has plenty of vice—try not to giggle when Pan-Taron tries to figure out how to pick up *Panda-Z*'s rocket arms after he's shot them off, or when an inebriated Dr. Pan-Ji wanders through the *Panda-Z* base trying to find his room. But when the two sit down to have a quiet dinner of batteries...well, just make sure you've recently gone to the bathroom, because peeing yourself is a real danger.



Freelance writer Tamaryn Tobian is still missing a sock after viewing *Panda-Z*.

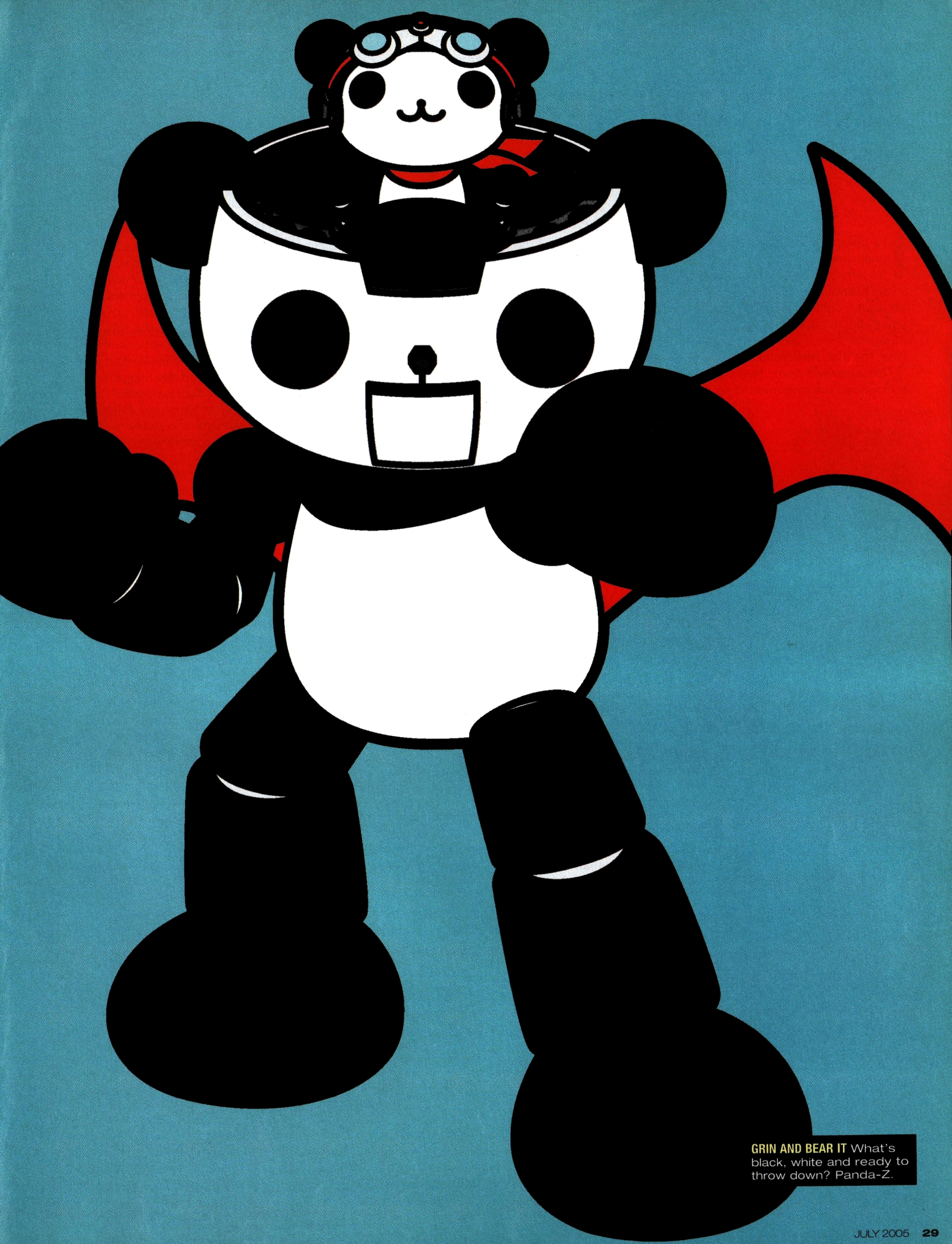


**EATS, SHOOTS AND LEAVES** Pan-Taron is here to eat bamboo shoots and kick butt—and he's all out of bamboo shoots.

## 1. IT'S THE PERFECT ROBO-PARODY

Think the *Panda-Z* looks familiar? That's because it was modeled after *Mazinger Z*, one of the earliest giant robots, created by the legendary Go Nagai. From *Panda-Z*'s red wings to his rocket punch to the panda-ized cast of characters, *Panda-Z* is a devastatingly funny parody of *Mazinger Z*. But since *Mazinger Z* is the granddaddy of all giant robot series, it essentially created the archetype all mecha shows follow. Meaning any anime fans who





**GRIN AND BEAR IT** What's black, white and ready to throw down? Panda-Z.



# flashinjapan 井の中の蛙大海を知らず

why overseas  
otaku dig

## DIE BUSTER

BY ANDREZ BERGEN

It's been 17 years since Studio Gainax unleashed *Gunbuster* on unsuspecting otaku, but the six-part OVA series is still legendary for a million reasons: there were gargantuan mecha, a subversively hilarious spoof of other anime series, and even the first real application of the infamous "Gainax bounce." (We'll leave it up to you to figure out what body part this applies to!) Oh, there's one other little fact: it was also the directorial debut of one Hideaki Anno. (Yes, the man later responsible for *Neon Genesis Evangelion*.)

So Japanese anime fans sat up and paid attention when Gainax announced the long-awaited spin-off *Die Buster*—especially since

career-limiting ability to break *anything*—who dreams of becoming a space pilot. She chances to meet Raruku, a member of an elite psychic pilot team called the Topless, and latches on to her, unwilling to lose what could be her one chance. When the space monsters that the Topless fight appear, Raruku calls out her Buster Machine DIX-Neuf to save the presumably helpless Nono. But once she sees Nono survive an unprotected trip to outer space on the back of the fleeing alien, she's not so sure Nono's so helpless after all! And even though Nono fails the Topless test, from that point she hangs out with Raruku in the hope of one day joining the Topless posse.

Nono isn't the only difference between the two *Buster* series.

"Psychic powers were hinted at in the old series, but this time we have new Buster machines with human personalities that develop a relationship with Nono and Raruku," explained Tsurumaki. The title change comes from the "upcoming appearance of a major mecha character called Die Buster," the director hinted.

Even if you missed the original *Gunbuster*, you need to look out for *Die Buster*, as it's the closest thing you'll be getting to an *FLCL* sequel anytime soon. Over half of *Die Buster*'s crew also worked with Tsurumaki on *FLCL*, including character designer Yoshiyuki Sadamoto. *Die Buster* also retains *FLCL*'s utter weirdness, from major story twists right down to cats that double as communication devices.

But if you're not an *FLCL* fan (somehow), Tsurumaki promises fans of the original *Gunbuster* won't be disappointed. "Of course I'm a big fan of *Gunbuster*—I pride myself on being the number one fan in the world!"

Tokyo correspondent Andrez Bergen would like to thank the lovely Yoko Umehara for her assistance with this article.



**LITTLE BUSTERS** Nono (above) keeps a positive attitude, but Raruku (left) knows she's all thumbs.



its director, Kazuya Tsurumaki, is Anno's protégé (and also the fact that this is Tsurumaki's first series since he helmed the fan-favorite *FLCL*).

*Die Buster* can't be called a direct sequel, since *Gunbuster*'s main characters and mecha have been replaced by a new cast. Before you diehard *Gunbuster* fans bust out your torches and pitchforks, though, consider this: both *Buster* stories revolve around the central tale of clumsy girls destined for greater things—Noriko in the first series, and

Nono in the latest, but both are unrelated—that happen to involve colossal mecha, outfits to die for and serious robo-action. Even if you left your heart with the original 6-episode OVA series way back in the 1980s, like so many otaku did, *Die Buster* is probably the frantic, action-packed and totally saucy sequel you've been pining for.

In *Die Buster*, Nono is a spunky, albeit clumsy waitress—with the

## ■ ATAGLANCE

**ORIGINAL CONCEPT/DIRECTOR:** Kazuya Tsurumaki (*FLCL*, *Neon Genesis Evangelion*)

**SCREENPLAY:** Yoji Enokido (*FLCL*, *Evangelion*, *RahXephon*)

**CHARACTER DESIGNER:** Yoshiyuki Sadamoto (*Evangelion*, *FLCL*, *Nadia*)

**MECHA DESIGNERS:** Junya Ishigaki (*Gundam Wing*), Shigeto Koyama (*Eureka 7*), Yoshitsune Izuna (*Gad Guard*) and Bukichi Nadeara

**CAST:** Yukari Fukui (Junko in *FLCL*, Sara in *School Rumble*); Raruku: Maaya Sakamoto (Stella in *Cowboy Bebop*, Hitomi in *Escaflowne*); Nichola: Mitsuo Iwata (Shotaro in *Akira*, Pyoro in *Vandread*); Casio: Takumi Yamazaki (Tanji in *Battle Angel Alita*, Incognito in *Hellsing*); Tykho: Miyuki Sawashiro (Hotaru in *Peacemaker*, Puchiko in *Di Gi Chara*)









▲ **SESSHOMARU** **VS.** **SEPHIROTH** ▼  
*Inuyasha* *Final Fantasy VII*





# lastman standing

激戦爆発

BY MICHAEL PULLMAN

| SESSHOMARU                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                      | SEPHIROTH                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
|                                                                                                                                              | Giant sword Tenseiga | FAVORITE WEAPON                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Giant sword Masamune |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Fluffy boa-thing     | FAVORITE STATEMENT                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Leather and metal    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Inuyasha             | ARCHENEMY                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Cloud Strife         |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Toxic Poison Claw    | ULTIMATE ATTACK                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Super Nova           |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Elton John           | FAVORITE MUSIC                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | My Chemical Romance  |
| Unlike his half-brother Inuyasha, Sesshomaru is a full-fledged demon who can take on a huge dog-like form at will. He hates all of mankind and wants to see the human race slaughtered. Incidentally, he also hates Inuyasha. |                      | The troubled and unfortunately powerful first offspring of the shadowy Jenova Project, Sephiroth went totally insane after eventually discovering his real identity. He vowed to completely destroy the planet and everyone on it. |                      |
|                                                                                                                                            |                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                      |

## THE BATTLE BEGINS

Deep in the night, a branch snaps in a quiet, moonlit forest.

Sesshomaru pauses mid-pace and turns his head, looking over his shoulder with a cold, half-lidded gaze, his pensive evening stroll interrupted. His clawed hand moves to the hilt of Tenseiga, his trusted partner, and he whirls around.

"Who's there?" he growls, peering into the shadows, his brow furrowed.

Silence.

Suddenly, lighting up the night sky, a brilliant ball of blue flame flares into existence in the sky above the forest and smashes down into the earth, creating an impact crater at Sesshomaru's feet. The white-haired demon is forced to take a few steps back from the expanding shockwave.

From the dust in center of the crater emerges Sephiroth, eyes dark, his hand moving to take his long blade Masamune from its harness. Without a word, he stalks slowly toward his opponent.

"Identify yourself!" Sesshomaru shouts, unsheathing his blade and dropping into a fighting stance.

"I am your destroyer," softly intones the sinister silver-haired stranger. "I am this planet's final hour. I am revenge embodied. I am Sephiroth."

Sesshomaru's eyes narrow. "I have no intention of defending the wretched mass that is humanity, but this is my home as well. You'd better be ready for a fight."

Sephiroth laughs derisively. "Your home? I will reclaim this planet for its *rightful* owners, the Cetra, and there's nothing you can do to stop me!"

Infuriated, Sesshomaru blasts forward, teeth gritted, slashing his blade at the stranger. Sephiroth pulls back, his feet sliding through the dust in the crater, bringing his sword up to meet the powerful opponent hurtling his way.

The force of their swords clashing sends Sesshomaru flying back; the agile demon lands on a slender tree branch and springs backward off it to stab at Sephiroth's chest.

The intruder deftly avoids the unexpected attack and with

another powerful downward slash knocks Sesshomaru into the dirt.

"Pathetic," spits Sephiroth.

"You don't know who you're dealing with," growls Sesshomaru. His eyes glow red and he springs up and bursts into his full demon form, a raging, fearsome giant dog creature. Huge strands of acid saliva drip from his massive jaws, hissing as they hit the ground and destroy the earth. He strikes at his foe with even more powerful—and now poisoned—fangs and claws, but to no avail.

Sephiroth gracefully backflips out of the crater, a malicious smirk crossing his lips as his eyes darken and his head lowers. Both hands raise into the air, and out of his back a single black wing bursts forth, feathers flying as he casts his spell.

"What...what magic is this?!" says Sesshomaru, eyes widening.

A low rumble echoes in the distance and without warning, a colossal meteor burns through the atmosphere, shrieking through the air that now shimmers with the fierce heat. Too large to avoid, the meteor smashes into Sesshomaru, burying the powerful demon in the earth.

## THE WINNAH

The dust clears in the now-ruined forest, and Sephiroth floats demurely in the moonlight, just above the ground, arms crossed. An eerie, total quiet has descended over the forest. Sesshomaru's head and shoulders tremble with the effort of lifting his gaze to regard his opponent.

"What...what are you...?" he pants.

"I am Cetra. And I own this planet." Sephiroth says, casting a disdainful glare at his fallen foe. "If the rest of the insects on this rock are as weak as you, victory is certain."

"You...you won't get away with this," Sesshomaru barely says, collapsing in utter defeat.

Sephiroth slowly turns his back and the darkness swallows him up. "I just did."

AI

Have an idea for an anime match-up? Let us know at [anime-insider@wizarduniverse.com](mailto:anime-insider@wizarduniverse.com)!





**FIVE FOR FIGHTING** Clockwise from top: Kakashi, Iruka, Sakura, Naruto and Sasuke are (throwing) stars in the making.



# NINJA POWERED

Your essential guide to all things 'Naruto'

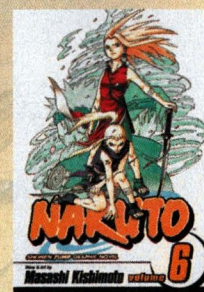
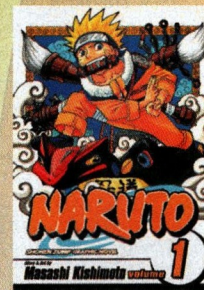
by the A.I. staff

On the scale of awesome-ness, ninjas rank pretty high. So naturally, it's no surprise that a world swarming with magic-wielding ninjas would spawn 140 anime episodes, 27 manga volumes, countless toys, video games and still counting for all of them.

Manga-ka Masashi Kishimoto probably knew he hit the jackpot in 1999, when he first drew the spunky Naruto, the determined but struggling ninja student who, unbeknownst to him, has a legendary nine-tailed demon fox living in his gut. It was sealed there by the Hokage, the village's leader, after the nasty beast nearly wrecked the town. Thanks to that, Naruto leads a less-than-charmed life. But it all changes when his ninja school pairs him up with an enigmatic teacher named Kakashi and two other students, the brooding Sasuke and the fiery Sakura. The four of them are sent

on heart-pounding ninja training missions, each of them using their mind-blowing powers, and we eventually learn that Naruto might have it in him to become the most powerful ninja *in the world*. Sound like a recipe for success? You have no idea.

What you might not know is that Naruto's world is so colossally huge that a field guide to its perils and pitfalls is a necessity. If you want to get prepared for the anime series when it debuts this fall on Cartoon Network's Toonami—or need a primer for the mega-popular manga in VIZ Media's *Shonen Jump* manga anthology—you can thank your lucky (throwing) stars *Anime Insider* has braved fire-breathing snakes and wind-controlling psychopaths to bring you this ultimate guide to the ultimate show! Read on—we'll be back here, pulling the shuriken out of our rear end...





# SCROLL CALL

A who's who of Konoha Village's up-and-coming ninja



## ◀ **NARUTO UZUMAKI**

A 12-year-old orphan shunned by the entire village of Konoha, Naruto actually (and unwittingly) has a fox demon spirit sealed within him! Desiring only attention, Naruto became a prankster and a troublemaker, although his life's goal is to become the village's top ninja—the Hokage!



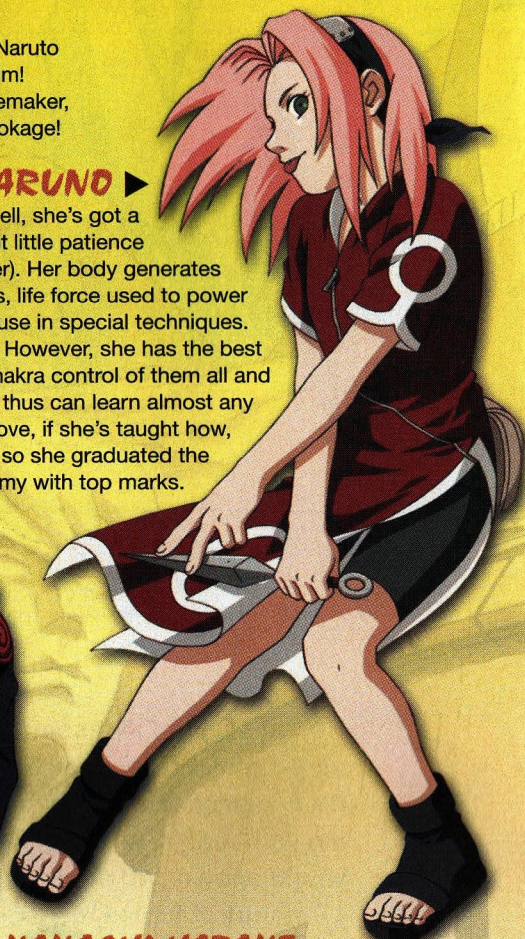
## **SASUKE UCHIHA** ▶

One of the few survivors of the powerful Uchiha clan, whose bloodline carries the sharingan eye ability (which lets the user mimic any ninja technique), Sasuke's considered a rookie genius. However, a mysterious and bloody past has made him a moody and solitary boy who lives and trains for one goal—to kill his older brother, Itachi.



## ◀ **KAKASHI HATAKE**

Despite being a jounin, one of the ninja elite, the 26-year-old Kakashi appears more interested in his "Make-Out" series romance novels than training students. A possessor of a single sharingan eye and the 4th Hokage's former apprentice, Kakashi's supposedly memorized over 1,000 jutsu techniques, and places much emphasis on teamwork.



## **SAKURA HARUNO** ▶

A member of Naruto's cell, she's got a major crush on Sasuke but little patience for Naruto (or his crush on her). Her body generates very little chakra—that is, life force used to power ninja powers—for her to use in special techniques.

However, she has the best chakra control of them all and thus can learn almost any move, if she's taught how, so she graduated the academy with top marks.



## NINJUTSU 101

Forget the prom; Naruto's got bigger things to worry about!

They say knowledge is power, and that's certainly true in ninja education. For Naruto to become the Hokage, he's got a lot of learning to do and school to attend. Here's a quick look at the steps he'll need to take to get there. But can he really make the grade?

**ACADEMY STUDENT** The lowest of the low, these grade-schoolers are still learning the basics. Once you graduate by creating two shadow clones, however, you finally get your head-protector band and become a genin.

**GENIN AND BEYOND** It's time to test those skills in the real world! Three-man genin cells guided by a

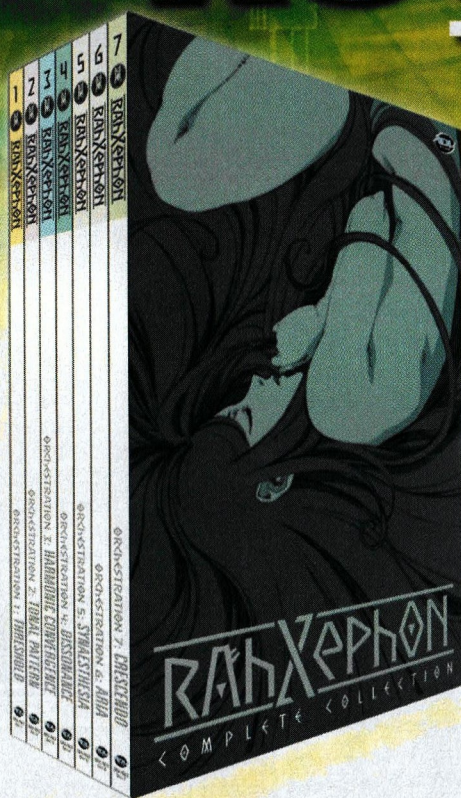
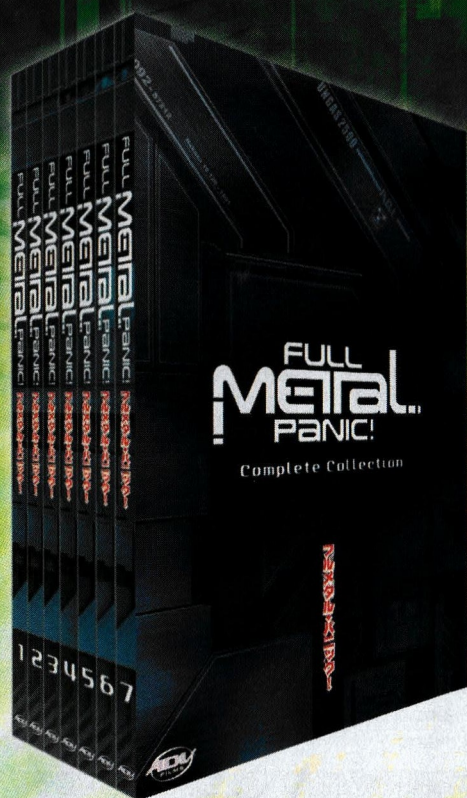
teacher go on mundane missions to earn experience and money. After an undetermined period, their teacher can elect to enter them into the rigorous, three-part chunin exam! The first's a difficult written test. Next, you must survive against other genin cells in a deadly forest battle to find the two scrolls necessary to pass. Finally, the finalists battle one-on-one! Makes your algebra test seem a bit easier, huh?



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# IT TAKES A VILLAGE

A quick tour of the hidden villages of 'Naruto'

The vast continent on which the story of *Naruto* takes place is home to a number of ninja villages, where specialized fighters learn the tricks of the ninjutsu trade. Here's a look at some of the villages you'll encounter upon first setting foot into the world of *Naruto*!



## HIDDEN LEAF VILLAGE

Protected by the all-powerful Hokage, Hidden Leaf Village is known for its diplomacy and its Mount Rushmore-style mountain sculpture.

**SPECIALTY:** Ninja from the Hidden Leaf Village are jacks-of-all-trades, wielding ninja skill from the most basic to the most powerful jutsu.

**RESIDENTS:** Naruto, Sasuke, Sakura and Kakashi



## HIDDEN MIST VILLAGE

Notorious and legendary for its extreme brutality, Hidden Mist Village is sometimes referred to as the "Bloody Mist Village."

**SPECIALTY:** Mist ninja tend to specialize in extremely powerful wind and water attacks; watch out for Haku's deadly power over ice!

**RESIDENTS:** Brutal Zabuza and the troubled but powerful Haku



## HIDDEN SOUND VILLAGE

Hidden Sound is a mystery wrapped in an enigma. Orochimaru, once a student of the Hidden Leaf's Hokage, plots and schemes from behind these walls.

**SPECIALTY:** Orochimaru's henchmen favor powerful weapons that use sound to penetrate the minds of their opponents.

**RESIDENTS:** The snake-eyed, malevolent Orochimaru



## HIDDEN SAND VILLAGE

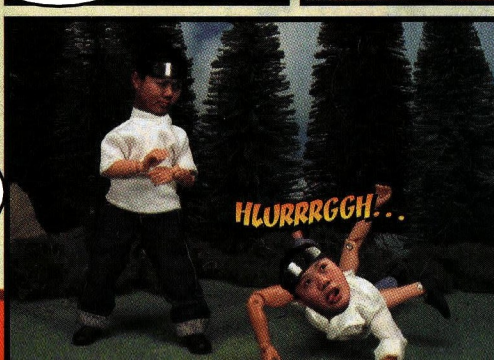
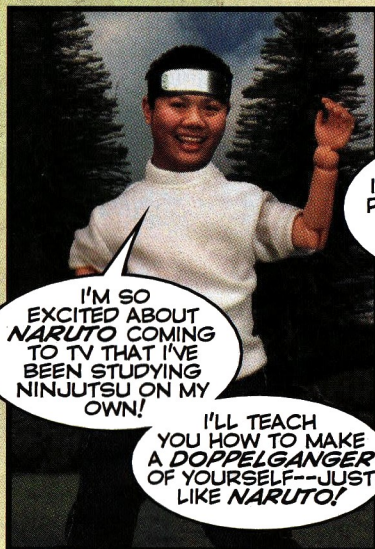
Surrounded by a maelstrom of blinding sand and dust, the enigmatic Hidden Sand is home to a number of shifty-eyed, sand-wielding ninja with devious intentions.

**SPECIALTY:** While Hidden Sand has no real specialty, Gaara is their most powerful warrior, and his ability to control the desert dust is second to none.

**RESIDENTS:** Gaara, fan-wielding Temari, and the powerful Kazekage

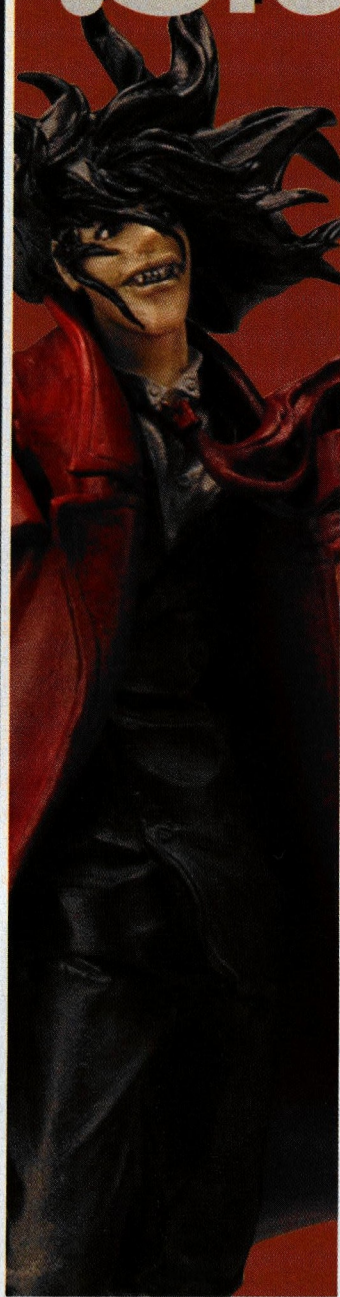
## HOW TO BE A NINJA

Ex-A.I. intern Miguel Esquivel shows you how to generate a doppelganger!





# !Story Image Figure!



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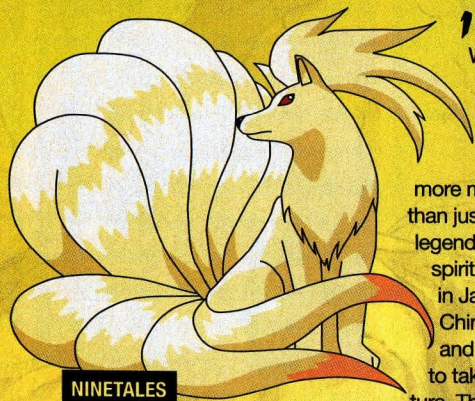
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# KNOW WAY

## Five things you don't know about 'Naruto'

So you've seen every episode (illegally), read every manga chapter (possibly illegally) and tattooed the Hidden Leaf symbol on your back (legal if you're over 18). But we're willing to bet you might not know these behind-the-anime facts.



NINETALES

### 1. OUT FOXED

We all know Naruto has an all-powerful nine-tailed demon fox raging inside his belly, and it gives him amazing powers. In Japan, there's more meaning behind this critter than just being a ninja battery; the legend states that the nine-tailed fox spirit, or the *kitsune* as he is called in Japan, flew over from ancient China during the T'ang dynasty and joined the legendary Tanuki to take his spot in Japanese culture. This legendary Kitsune also

inspired a Pokémon called Ninetales, seen above.

### 2. SOMETHING FISHY

Naruto's name means more than just dollar signs. His full name, Naruto Uzumaki, is actually a very clever reference to the white and pink fishcakes you see atop ramen bowls, which is Naruto's favorite food! The fishcakes are called *naruto* by virtually everyone in Japan, even though their full title is *narutomaki*. Uzumaki means whirlpool, a reference to the swirly pink stripe in every fishcake.



FISHCAKES

### 3. TIMELINE TROUBLE

In the fantastical world of *Naruto*, there are fire-breathing snakes, ancient legendary ninja, spectacular magic and...VCRs? That's right, Kishimoto

deliberately built anachronisms into Naruto's world. The Hidden Leaf ninja can watch *Monty Python* reruns, but they don't have cars. So far, Kishimoto has yet to offer an explanation of the technology in *Naruto* and why he chose to include some things and not others. The world may never know!

### 4. KANEEEEEEEDAAAAA

*Naruto* creator Masashi Kishimoto always wanted to be a manga-ka,



AKIRA POSTER

but didn't kick things into high gear until he saw a movie poster for Katsuhiro Otomo's legendary action epic *Akira*. He was so inspired by the film (especially the poster illustration) and Otomo's skill that he worked his hardest to emulate the master. You can still see some of Otomo's influence in Kishimoto's work!

hiragana characters. The Japanese name for this guy is *henohenomoheji*, which when sounded out is simply the characters that make up his mug. Kakashi keeps a picture of this on his wall; what's more, Japanese schoolchildren use *henohenomoheji* to draw faces on scarecrows. What's the Japanese word for scarecrow? *Kakashi*.

### 5. FUNNY FACE

Naruto's enigmatic and easy-going sensei Kakashi has a soft spot for this funny-looking face made entirely out of Japanese

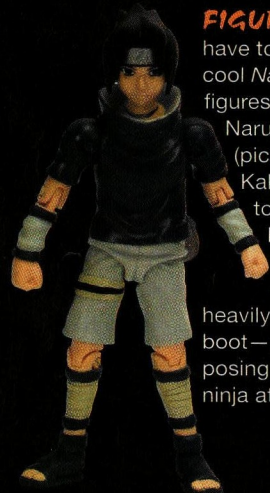
HENOHENOMOHEJI



## NINJA SWAG

The best 'Naruto' merchandise Japan's got and we want

With six years of manga and four of anime, *Naruto* sure has had some sweet swag in Japan. While VIZ is keeping mum on its *Naruto* merchandising plans, here are our suggestions for what to import.



**FIGURED OUT** You have to start with the cool *Naruto* action figures from Bandai. Naruto, Sasuke (pictured) and Kakashi each had tons of alternate heads, hands and weapons, and were heavily articulated to boot—perfect for posing in all of their ninja attacks.



**DISAPPEARING ACT** Show off your ninja disappearing skills with this tea mug, featuring Naruto and his sensei, Iruka. Just add hot water and a black panel reveals the sexy no jutsu and a bloody-nosed ninja master underneath.

**LEAF ME ALONE** There've been plenty of *Naruto* video games for all consoles, but the Nintendo GameBoy Advance SP took it a step further with this special edition. It proudly bears the Konoha Village leaf-emblem, and is perfect for ninjas on the go.



**NINJA BOURGEOIS** A ninja's got special cases and hidden pouches for all of his/her gear, but where do you put those pesky coins where they won't jingle? A perfect replica of Naruto's frog-shaped coin purse does the trick.

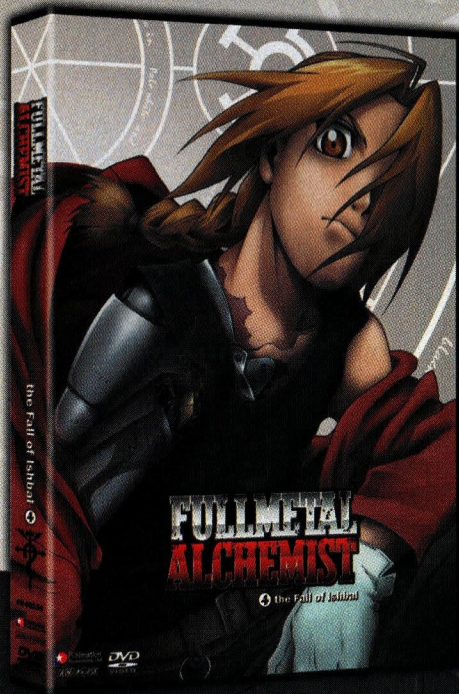


**JACKET RACKET** Naruto cosplayers with the dough have already purchased the mountains of official costumes goods, from the ninja headbands to the individual jackets of Naruto (pictured), Sasuke and Kakashi. While pricy, they're dead-on accurate to the anime—plus they keep you warm. **ai**





# READY... AIM... FIRE!



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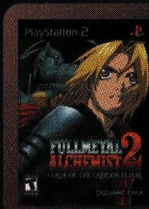
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**COMIC GENIUS** For the original adventures of Akito (left) and Sana, check out Miho Obana's manga from TOKYOPOP.

ARTWORK © MIHO OBANA / SHUEISHA, INC.



# THE *Ladies'* MAN

By Robert Bricken

An exclusive interview with legendary director Akitaro Daichi on 'Kodocha,' a 'Fruits Basket' sequel and why he's hooked on heroines

**T**ahiti Studio doesn't look very funny, but the man inside it certainly is. Essentially one large room with mini-kitchen attached, the cluttered Tokyo studio is full of art desks, scattered papers and computer equipment, yet oddly devoid of anime genius or hilarity—which means Akitaro Daichi must keep all of it in his head. Despite being the director of some of the most renowned anime comedies of modern times—*Fruits Basket* and *Kodocha* (finally available this August in America, thanks to FUNimation) to name just a few—Akitaro Daichi is immensely personable and easy-going. He gives a friendly smile as he rummages through one of his work desks and then his messy shelves to find a small camera tape, which he throws in a camcorder. "I'm taping the interview," he explains almost modestly. "I'll use it to help my English."

Daichi acts as if *Anime Insider* is doing him the favor by interviewing the director about his incredible career, what makes him laugh and (the eternal question) where that *Fruits Basket* sequel is. He also acts as if his legion of American fans is doing him a favor by enjoying his shows.

"America has so many great cartoons..." he shakes his head. "I'm just overjoyed that so many people all like my work. From here on out, I'm going to do everything I possible can to make more interesting material for everybody!"



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:  
Rei, Asako, Sana's mom,  
Sana herself and Akitaro.



**ANIME INSIDER:** You've directed some of the most acclaimed anime comedies of all time. Do you feel like a comedy genius?

**AKITARO DAICHI:** In terms of anime, obviously I feel like I am very strong with comedy for the most part. I'd say it's my main strength.

**How did you develop your sense of humor?**

When I was in school, I was able to see American cartoons. My favorite was *Popeye*, and I also liked *Heckle & Jeckle*. That's basically how I developed my sense of humor.

In Japan, a TV series called *Osomatsu-kun* was a very big inspiration for me, based on an equally hilarious manga by Fujio Akatsuka. I watched it in junior high school. It's about a crazy group of kids—sextuplets, actually—who are rude and wild...it's slapstick comedy, and it's very, very popular in Japan. To this day, no series has reached *Osomatsu-kun*'s level of greatness.

And then in high school I read the manga *Hinomaru Gekijou* [or, *Flag of the Rising Sun Theater*] by Hisashi Eguchi. Shin Tamura is the author of a very interesting manga called *Tomato Boy!* His action poses are great; he's very slapstick oriented. These also added to the themes of a lot of my work.

I'm actually friends with these three artists. We're considered to have the same kind of humor.

**Is slapstick what makes you laugh most?**

Absolutely. I don't really have to think about it and I just laugh.

**Do you laugh at your own shows?**

I laugh a lot.

**You're obviously a manga fan...what anime did you watch?**

*Gamba no Boken*, which is a children's anime about a mouse and his friends. I also love *Urusei Yatsura* [an early series by Inuyasha creator Rumiko Takahashi].

I really liked the direction on *Urusei Yatsura*—it was actually done by [later *Ghost in the Shell* director] Mamoru Oshii, who also

## OSOMATSU-KUN



directed the first *UY* movies. I wasn't a fan of the *Urusei Yatsura* movies, though; they weren't as funny as the TV series.

Actually, I've been disappointed ever since Oshii stopped directing comedies, because he was so good at it! I have to admit I don't have much of a taste for his newer works.

**Most of your leading characters are female. Is this by choice?**

It is definitely on purpose.

**Why?**

Because I like girls. [Laughs] I like women. Saying I like females would probably be the best way of putting it.

**Do you think they make for better stories?**

This is probably just a Japanese conception, but women think more, while culturally speaking, men don't think as much. They are more action-oriented—I don't mean action as in the genre.

**Gotcha.**

If you're making a drama, you would want the characters who think more. To me, the obvious choice is a woman.

**What are some of your favorite female characters?**

I don't have necessarily one character that I absolutely love, but Lum, from Rumiko Takahashi's *Urusei Yatsura*, really kind of hits the spot.

**How did you get involved with *Kodocha*?**

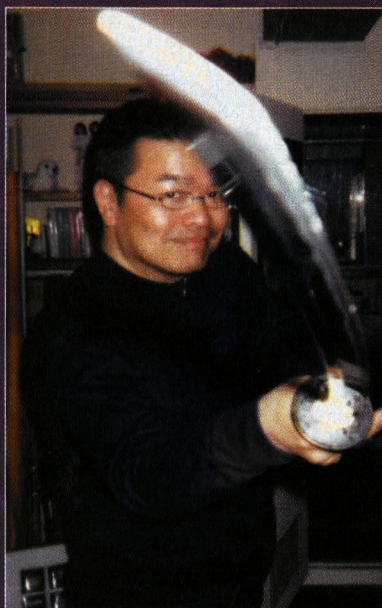
It was my second major project. My first was an anime called *Nurse Angel Ririka SOS*, and after that the producer handed me

## Vital Stats | AKITARO DAICHI

**BORN:** Takasaki City in 1956. "It's very far north—very, very north of Tokyo."

**FIRST JOB IN ANIME:** "I started when I was 23, as a cameraman on *Future Boy Conan*, which was directed by Hayao Miyazaki. I was just a new employee, so I saw him, but that's all."

**FAMILY:** "I have three daughters. It's lucky I like girls!"



**COLLECTS:** American dolls and license plates. "I was in New York three days ago, and I flew United Airlines. I was so impressed by their service I bought a Flight Attendant Barbie."

**HOBBIES:** Photography  
**FAVORITE FOOD:** French Fries

**FAVORITE FOOD IN AMERICA:** Bacon. "When I was in New York City, I stayed for three days and every morning I ate bacon and eggs. The first morning I was eating this fabulous breakfast with six people there; the second morning was just me and my daughter; the last day it was just me."



URUSEI YATSURA'S LUM



# TENCHI IS BACK!



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The gang's all back and their world gets turned upside-down when they receive a strange visitor. While Ryoko, Ayeka, and the others are arguing, Tenchi collapses from exhaustion. At the same time the mysterious Lady Tokimi dispatches the warrior Z to Earth in order to learn more about Tenchi and his connection to Washu and Tsunami. What will be Tenchi's fate?





the *Kodocha* script and told me it was something I absolutely had to work on. I thought it was great and accepted.

#### Had you read the *Kodocha* manga first?

No, I didn't have a chance. I got the script first, but I felt a real connection to it.

#### What attracted you to the story?

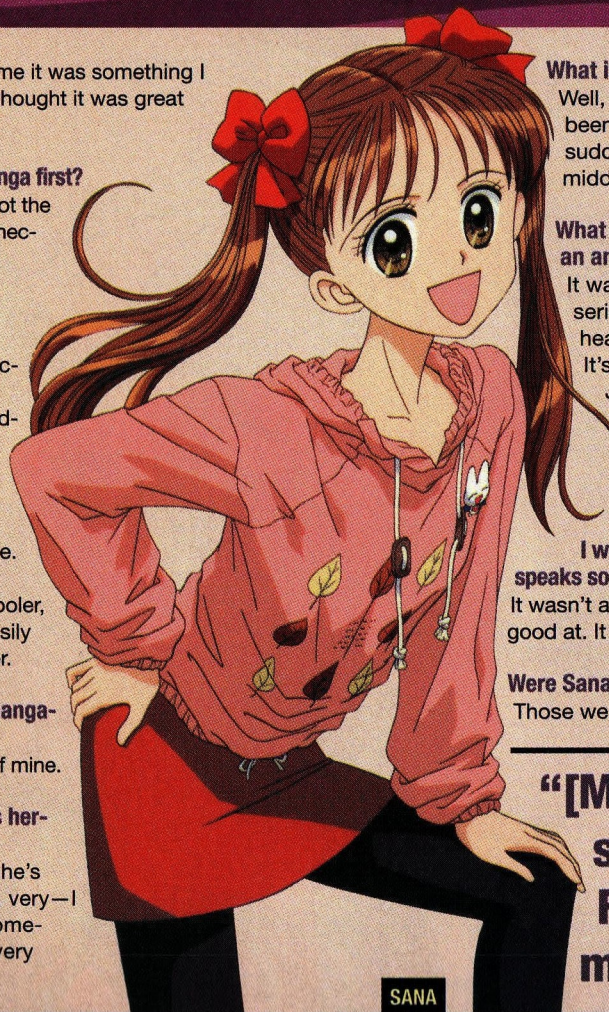
I thought that the main character Sana was just really cool; she had very good style. I hadn't read a lot of shojo manga, but I knew how popular they were at the time. But I know enough to recognize that *Kodocha* was unique. It wasn't your typical shojo story...it was better, it was cooler, and you could connect so easily with Sana, the main character.

#### Have you met the *Kodocha* manga-ka Miho Obana?

She's actually a good friend of mine.

#### Is she as crazy as she makes herself out to be in her manga?

She's cute in person...and she's also sexy! Really, she's very, very—I would say cool, but she's something beyond cool. She's a very impressive person.



SANA

#### What is the craziest thing she has ever done?

Well, Miho and I went to New York in 2002 and we'd been drinking. We walked to Times Square, and she suddenly started dancing the flamenco—right in the middle of the square.

#### What was the toughest part of turning the manga into an anime?

It was all extremely difficult. [Laughs] Really, shojo series focus on emotions, what's inside the heart...and that's where the tension comes from. It's really hard to convey that in an anime. Plus, Japanese culture is not very straightforward at all—it's always "face" versus actual thoughts, "face" versus actual feelings...to translate that into writing, let alone an anime, is ridiculously challenging.

#### I would have thought it was Sana's dialogue—she speaks so much, so quickly.

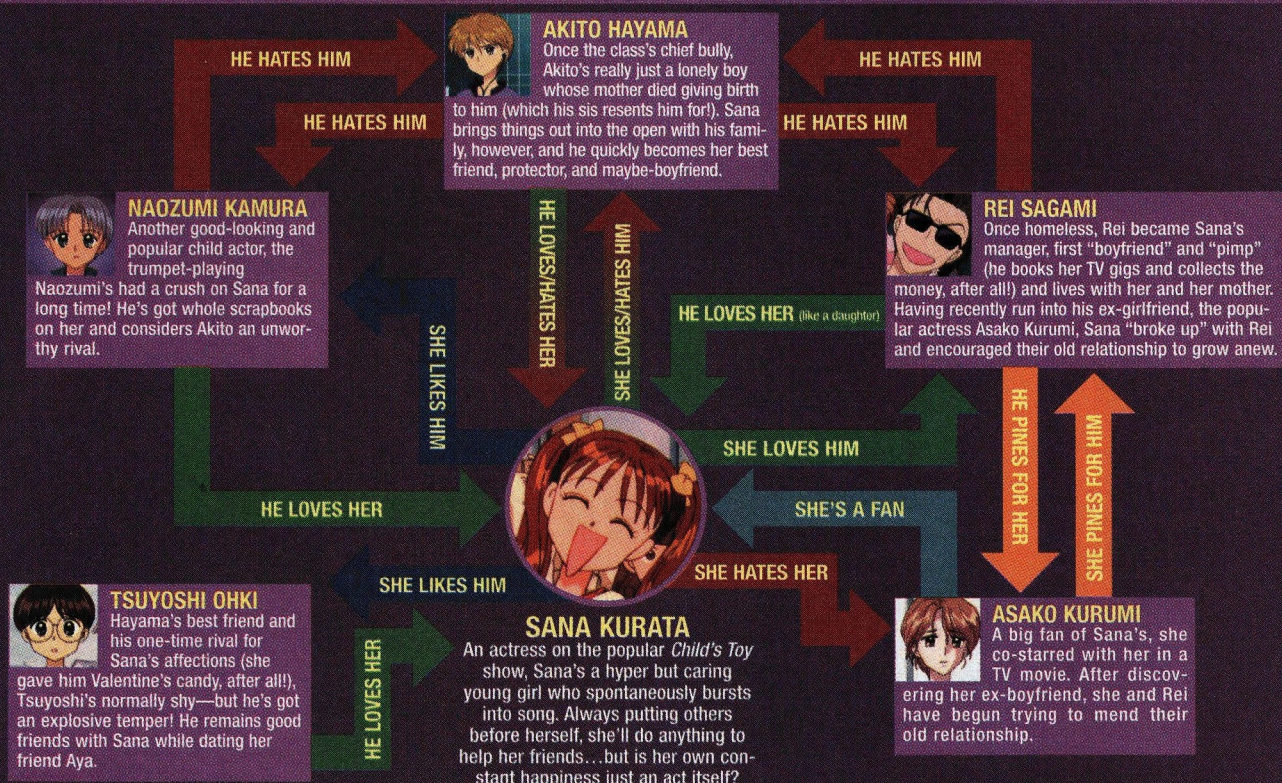
It wasn't actually that difficult, because that's what I am good at. It came very naturally.

#### Were Sana's impromptu "songs" hard?

Those were very intense. Very tough.

**"[Miho Obana] suddenly started dancing the Flamenco—right in the middle of Times Square."**

## Love Chain | Check out the tangled web Sana has to unravel



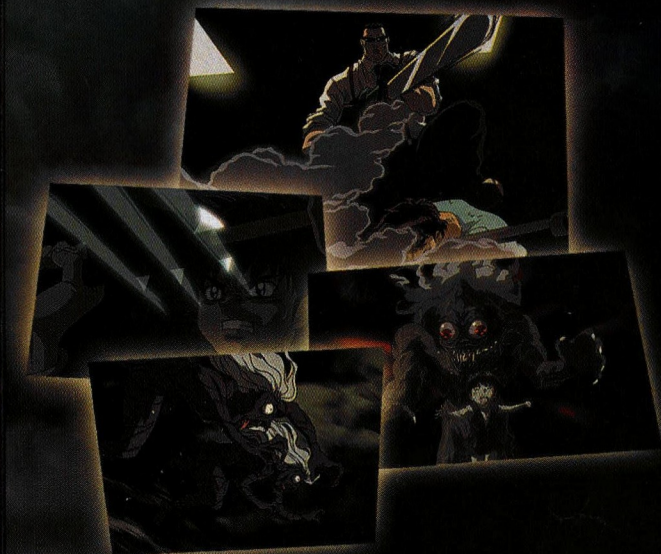


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**geneon**



The *Kodocha* manga only had 10 volumes, but the anime series lasted much longer.

The show was very, very popular and the sponsor basically said let's do more...naturally, I was quite pleased.

#### How was it creating new stories for Sana on your own, instead of using the manga?

In the beginning, it was extremely excruciating to try and build new stories that would match the original stories. But since I'd worked on the original stories themselves, it kind of became a little bit easier to build them and it just became a natural process and I was very happy with it.

favorites—the Japanese title translates to “A Scrape on the Heart.”

#### What don't people know about the *Kodocha* series that you would like them to?

The fact that I actually wrote almost all of the “songs” on the show myself. I really didn't have anything to build off of. I did it literally by myself with no additional tools or suggestions. Every week, while I was driving to and from work, just thinking up those lyrics...

#### I'm impressed you didn't get in a wreck.

I am a very safe driver.

#### Do you think *Kodocha* has been your biggest success so far?

I think I do have a lot of successes but...I think it that was my first major success.

#### How do you think *Kodocha* might do in the U.S.?

I have absolutely no idea, but I am looking forward to hearing about it.

#### What attracted you to *Fruits Basket*?

Like *Kodocha*, I first heard of it when I got the script from the producer. The truth is that when I was first reading the script I actually didn't think it was that interesting. I thought, “This is just too pretty for me.” After all, I like slapstick comedy and intense humor.

I think the producer was probably thinking I would add in a special touch with humor;

plus, the producer was very comfortable with me and knew he could give the entire project over to me and I would make it work. And then I added my sense of humor to the story. [Grins]

#### Was there a tough part in adapting *Fruits Basket* into an anime?

The scenario writer and I and everybody just kind of got together and tried to figure out what the story was really about, but we didn't really know until the end. But the story's atmosphere felt really good. Even though it was tough, it flowed pretty easily.

#### Making a character as upbeat and nice as Tohru while keeping her from being annoying must have been tough.

When I read the script I really wanted to make sure I didn't crush her character...not stepping on the author's shoes, but Tohru was seriously challenging. Obviously, Tohru isn't a normal, average girl.

I took care in having everybody around



**BURST ANGEL** The high-energy Sana can't help but help her friends...whether they want her to or not.

#### Did Obana-san help with the new episodes at all?

In the beginning, she did actually help for one episode. The story where Sana's father shows up.

#### Do you have a favorite character?

I've got a lot of favorite ones but I like Sana the best. I also like Babbitt.

#### Can you explain why you put the bat Babbitt in the show? It's not in the manga.

The sponsor wanted to have a mascot on the show. He was like ah, Daichi, you should have a mascot for this, don't you think, nudge, nudge, wink, wink.

Plus, Obana-san put a lot of little notes about characters, or what they were feeling, in the manga panels. I used Babbitt to get those into the show.

#### Do you have a favorite story arc from the show?

I've got a lot, but episode 25 is definitely one of my



**FRUITS BASKET'S TOHRU**

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# Crane Game

FUNimation asks fans to fold 'Fruits Basket 2'



FUNIMATION'S CRANES FOR FRUBA 2 PROJECT

**D**aichi himself might not be planning a *Fruits Basket* sequel, but FUNimation isn't waiting for him to change his mind on his own. This convention season FUNimation is offering fans who want all-new episodes of *Fruits Basket* a chance to express themselves through the ancient art of origami!

Interested otaku are invited to visit FUNimation's booth (seen left, in action) at major conventions and perform one simple feat—fold a paper crane. At the end of the con year, a mountain of cranes will be col-

lected and sent directly to the *Fruits Basket* Committee in Japan to hopefully convince the powers-that-be to greenlight a second season of the wildly popular comedy.

This promotion, based on the Japanese legend of 1000 Paper Cranes, is the brainchild of Lance Heiskell, head brand manager for FUNimation. "The demand for a second season of *Fruits Basket* has been intense," explains Heiskell. "This will give all the *Fruits Basket* fans at conventions a chance to influence the fate of the entire series." Here's hoping that *Fruits Basket* fiends will have reason to celebrate in the near future. But until then, we'll have to wait to see how it all unfolds. ■ Justin Kovalsky

Tohru look at her and think she's annoying because she's so bubbly—but with time gradually all the characters grew to like her and want to protect her. That was something that I really wanted to stress.

That all the supporting characters had this change of attitude towards her, this is what really makes the story. I think this is how people connect to the story, and why *Fruits Basket* has been so popular in so many cultures.

## Any thoughts on *Fruits Basket*'s immense popularity in America?

I know about it, mainly by the fact that I have been to American anime conventions, especially Fanime Con in San Jose, California. So many fans attended the *Fruits Basket* panels; I was very shocked to see that. Actually, there's a lot of buzz about *Fruits Basket* in Taiwan and Singapore, too.

## Anime Insider gets letters all the time asking if there will be a *Fruits Basket* sequel. What's the word?

This is definitely the most asked question I get...in Japan and America. So obviously hearing my response everybody is disappointed and mildly depressed, but I have absolutely no plans to continue *Fruits Basket* at this moment.

## That's...sad.

One of the reasons why *Fruits Basket* is done is because the people that worked on the project, myself included, feel that it is artistically complete by itself. But in response to the people who want to see more *Fruits Basket*, I am making a new series that fits the same audience. It's based on a popular shojo series, but I can't say which one.

## Do you have any other projects in the works?

I am currently working on a kids' TV series called

*Ojarumaru*...it is very much like *SpongeBob SquarePants*. I have been actually working on it for the past eight years.

I am also beginning a second project, an action-comedy called *Splastic Gagas*. The setting is in Asia; the main character is actually a guy who uses kung fu.

## Is there anything you want to do that you haven't done yet?

I have many. So this year I am actually trying to get on stage, to do a theatrical production. I really want to do a live-action project; I want to be doing that next year.

## So if you had to turn into an animal from the Chinese Zodiac, which would it be?

I'm actually a Monkey. But I would actually prefer to be a Tiger. Tigers are very cool. If I were a *Fruits Basket* tiger, it would admittedly be more cute than cool, so I'd rather be the cool version.

## Got a thing for cats?

No, people in Japan generally drink water, but people born in the year of the Tiger are considered to drink sake instead of water! I like sake a lot, so obviously it would have been nice to be born in the appropriate year.

AI

Editor Robert Bricken had the honor of stripping down for Daichi-san to show the esteemed director his Lum tattoo. Special thanks to Jon Baumgardner for his translation.



**CUTE-POCALYPSE** The staggeringly high cute factor of her zodiac animal friends has already blown Tohru's mind.



Watch Your Back!!

Baki is Coming!



# BAKI

## THE GRAPPLER

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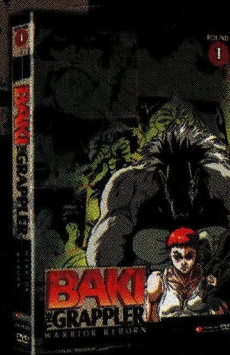


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# ANCI



**TRIPLE THREAT** Mugen (above), Jin (center) and Fuu (right) walk a lonely road together in *Samurai Champloo*.

SAMURAI CHAMPOO © WAGOLIFE / SHIMADZU CHAN 2005



# ENT HISTORY

## UNEARTHING THE SECRETS OF THE 'SAMURAI CHAMPLOO' CREW

**W**e're all in love with *Samurai Champloo*, but the truth is, we know so little about it! After all, each week on Cartoon Network's Adult Swim block, we're treated to another rollicking adventure with Mugen, Jin and Fuu on their quest to find the Sunflower Samurai...but the history of our heroes is completely shrouded in mystery. In fact, *Samurai Champloo* skimps on backstory more than Mugen skimps on paying the bill.

Or does it? If you pay close attention, in virtually every episode we're given just a smidge of what's really going on with this enigmatic trio. So we at *Anime Insider* put on our sleuthing caps and dug through each episode for clues that could pull back the veil of mystery that blankets the past. You might be surprised by what you find out!

### MUGEN

Tough as nails and about as thin, Mugen is a graduate of the Dojo of Hard Knocks. From his baggy clothes and clunky wooden sandals to his acrobatic sword swinging, everything about Mugen screams unorthodox. But there's much more to him than his incredible blend of breakdancing and slaying people!

- Surrounded by thugs in Fuu's tea shop, Mugen finds himself in a tight spot. When the thugs' leader tells him that it's wise to surrender, Mugen replies, "I don't care about your common sense. I was born on Ryuuku"—and the bullies back off! Mugen's hometown on Okinawa must have been one rough neighborhood! (Ep. 1)
- Taking the lead for a change, Mugen guides the group along the nearby coast. When asked how

he's finding his way, Mugen replies, "I can smell it, the ocean." Spoken like a true salty dog. It sounds like Mugen's got some history with the water and the "spirits within," but is it good or bad? (Ep. 13)

- Meeting a sinister ex-accomplice from Ryuuku dredges up some unpleasant memories for Mugen—and gives us our juiciest glimpse at his shadowy past yet! Betrayal on the high seas and a run-in with his old personal demons sends Mugen on a journey through his past. Swashbuckling and treachery...one might get the idea that Mugen used to be a pirate! (Ep. 14)

### JIN

Most people think glasses look dorky, but try saying that to Jin, who maintains the style and attitude of a samurai even though he doesn't serve anyone. The four-eyed ronin is normally tight-lipped, but even more so about his past. That may be because there are a whole lot of folks who would love to see him dead!

- Before a duel with some Yagyu samurai, Jin professes that he's no ordinary samurai. "Serving your master and doing as he wishes; is it truly honorable?" Usually the followers of bushido are unquestioningly loyal. What caused Jin to stray from the path? (Ep. 1)
- Jin plays a local geezer at shogi to win some money. As it turns out, Jin's an expert, having learned the game from his sensei! "I never beat him at shogi," he tells his opponent. "What about at dueling?" asks the old-timer. Jin's ensuing silence says tons more about his past than his mouth ever has. (Ep. 5)
- Defeating a legendary samurai called "The Thousand Man Killer" will make you famous, but then every punk will want a piece. A stranger and his skilled underling try to provoke Jin, who gets called "traitor," "murderer," and some names we can't print! Who did Jin tick off, and why does he insist he wasn't the one who did the betraying? (Ep. 8)

### FUU

Fuu is the guiding force behind the trio's journey, which is probably why it's taking them so long to get there! Willful and talkative, Fuu's sharp tongue gets her in as much trouble as her connection to the mysterious Sunflower Samurai. It's a good thing she has backup...when they're actually around, that is.

- A pickpocket who kidnaps Fuu gets her to spill about her lack of family. "My father has been gone a long time. My mother died a year ago." It sounds like the Sunflower Samurai is the only living person she knows...not counting those other two unreliable guys. (Ep. 7)
- In return for showing him around town, a foreigner gives Fuu a big clue: the Sunflower Samurai is probably around Nagasaki! Nagasaki was the first port in Japan to open to the West, receiving European cultural influences. What does Fuu's quarry have to do with the influx of Western ideas? (Ep. 6)
- Fuu associates the odd skull charm attached to her knife with the Sunflower Samurai. When she peers into the eye socket, she is surprised to find a tiny crucifix! The samurai's connection to Christianity is staggering, given the religion's taboo status in Japan at the time. Just who is the Sunflower Samurai? (Ep. 19) 





By Zac  
Bertschy

# THE FAN-TASTIC WORLD OF

# OTAKU

A field guide to anime fandom courtesy of 'Genshiken'



**W**e've all seen them. Sometimes they're sitting in front of a bookstore's manga section, reading away. Sometimes they're wearing an over-elaborate costume at a con. And sometimes, they're you. They are *otaku*, anime fans who just take it all a little too far.

If you've been having trouble determining just who is truly obsessed (and who isn't), you're in luck. This July, Media Blasters is releasing the 12-episode series *Genshiken*, a hilarious look at a struggling college anime club called The Society for the Study of Modern Visual Culture. Among its seven members are *otaku* of nearly every recognizable shape and size, and you're bound to find one that reminds you of your friends, coworkers...and maybe even yourself. So take a peek at our *otaku* fan guide and see if you recognize any familiar faces.



## THE NEWBIE

Exemplified by Sasahara

### PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Physically nondescript; completely normal in appearance
- Can fade into a crowd without being noticed
- ...at all, by anyone, ever

### BEHAVIORS

- On a mission to become a "true otaku" and impress his friends, even though he barely understands anime fan culture
- Emulates the behavior of his fellow club members in the hope of gaining acceptance
- Determined to overcome his shame regarding hentai
- Admires King Dork, hoping to one day be just like him
- Actually works towards being fanatically obsessed with anime and takes every opportunity to learn how



## THE QUIET GUY

Exemplified by Mitsunori

### PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Out of shape and overweight
- Wears big, oversize clothes that don't call attention to his size
- Shuffles rather than walks

### BEHAVIORS

- Extremely socially awkward; would never dream of talking to a girl
- When he does get the will to say something, he stutters
- Most comfortable having in-depth, detailed conversations about his favorite anime
- Partakes in just as much hentai as everyone else, but is too embarrassed to talk about it
- Uncomfortable around dramatic social situations; doesn't really know how to handle people who aren't like him



## THE HOT NERD

Exemplified by Kousaka

### PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Surprisingly attractive for a nerd
- Has naturally good taste in clothing
- Can normally be seen rocking out on his headphones to the latest J-pop CD

### BEHAVIORS

- Good-natured and totally oblivious
- Due to his personality and good looks, he has no problem attracting the ladies; he's just too dense to realize it
- Can engage in regular conversation with normal people for several minutes before they realize he's a huge nerd
- Unfairly talented at fighting games
- Would be a completely normal person if not for the corrupting influence of anime



## THE GIRLFRIEND

Exemplified by Saki

### PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Wears fashionable clothes
- Stays in decent shape just so she can impress her boyfriend
- Pays close attention to personal grooming, on a regular basis

### BEHAVIORS

- Only hangs out with anime fans because she fell in love with The Hot Nerd
- Resists any amount of education on anime, for fear of slowly becoming an otaku
- Actively demeans the club members as a defense mechanism
- Doesn't realize that none of this will work and she's already destined to become a huge nerd



## THE CRAFTSMAN

Exemplified by Tanaka

### PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Stocky, but not fat
- Prone to facial hair
- Likes baggy clothes that are easy to work in

### BEHAVIORS

- Keenly interested in model building and costume-making
- Partial to classic anime, since there are more models to build for older shows
- Polite to a fault
- Believes model building and costuming are sacred arts and is eager to educate others on how to do them perfectly
- Secretly has a big crush on The Cosplayer, but would never admit it for fear of tarnishing his "reputation" as a master costumer



## THE COSPLAYER

Exemplified by Ohno

### PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Cares far more about her costumes than her street clothes, which is obvious
- Only bothers with personal grooming when it's time to cosplay
- Maintains her figure, but only in the interest of cosplay

### BEHAVIORS

- Shy and reserved until she puts on a costume, when her real personality starts to shine
- Obsessively thinks about costumes; every new anime series or video game has potential
- Revels in the attention she gets, hamming it up for the camera
- Harbors a thing for The Craftsman but would never admit it, since she's just as bad with men as her friends are with women



## KING DORK

Exemplified by Madarame

### PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Thin as a rail, or perhaps thinner
- Glasses
- Questionable haircut

### BEHAVIORS

- Truly believes with all his heart that anime is the most noble pursuit of all
- Will argue anyone under the table about anything related to anime
- Has absolutely no clue at all how to deal with real women

- Open, honest and frighteningly proud about his obsession with hentai
- Completely devoted to several long-running anime series, and will happily provide you with uninteresting trivia
- Secretly wishes he were cool enough to date The Girlfriend



OKAY, IT'S TIME FOR OUR WEEKLY 18-HOUR YAMATO DISCUSSION!



# DEATH

## THE 10 ANIME CHARACTERS WE'D LOVE TO SEE DEAD

By Bamboo Dong

It's no big secret that we just love anime here at *Anime Insider*, but we'll be the first to admit that not every character is worthy of worship. Even in the best of shows, there are always going to be some characters that get on everyone's nerves but refuse to disappear from the screen. So instead, we'll settle for burning them in effigy with this list of the Top 10 most annoying anime characters that we either love to hate...or just plain hate.

### 10 SAILOR MOON (Sailor Moon)

The ultimate guardian of love and justice, Serena is an obnoxious schoolgirl by day, and a useless Sailor Scout by night. With her tiara and magical wand, she transforms what should be an awesome magical girl smackdown into a festival of lame.

#### CRIMES:

- Advocating scandalously short skirts and high heels even more than Paris Hilton
- Being the "heroine" despite always crying and getting captured
- Spreading the stereotype that blondes are dumb

**PUNISHMENT:** Banish this Moon Princess to the moon for eternity. Or until she implodes, thanks to the vacuum of space.



### 9 YUGI (Yu-Gi-Oh!)

The up-and-coming champion of the Duel Monster game world, Yugi never loses. And that's the problem! Since he always wins at the last second, it never seems like a fair game. What fun is that?

#### CRIMES:

- Pulling a card out of nowhere to win every match
- Having two moods: whiny and bossy
- That hair

**PUNISHMENT:** 1,000 paper cuts with Yu-Gi-Oh! cards ought to do the trick.



### 7 RELENA (Gundam Wing)

Relena Peacecraft spends her time pining over Heero and trying to bring about universal peace by urging the boys to kill for the ideals of pacifism.

Wait, what?

#### CRIMES:

- Creating her own language where "Heero!" is a noun, verb, adjective and adverb
- Preventing the Gundam pilots from badass robot-fighting action
- Being the only person awful enough to have a pink limousine

**PUNISHMENT:** A firing squad...manned by Gundams.



### 8 EXCEL (Excel Saga)

Boisterous and ADD-addled, Excel Excel is devoted to helping Lord Ilpalazzo take over the world, one city at a time. Her not-so-secret weapon is her shrill voice and her ability to ruin other people's lives.

#### CRIMES:

- Making the same "let's eat Menchi" joke over and over

- Shattering the eardrums of all the poor viewers
  - Slaughtering innocent, hard-working immigrants
- PUNISHMENT:** Force her to listen to Kelly Clarkson's new album incessantly until she suffers her brain hemorrhages.

BOYS  
CAN CRY...  
I MAKE  
THEM.





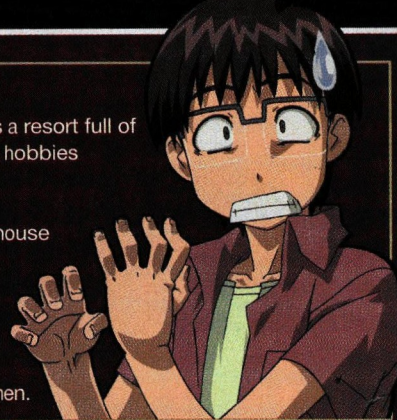
## 6 KEITARO (Love Hina)

Hinata Springs' favorite punching bag, Keitaro manages a resort full of girls when he's not accidentally groping his tenants. His hobbies include studying, repairing walls and perversion.

### CRIMES:

- Generating a grassroots movement for boys to be bumbling house slaves to whatever women will take them
- Glorifying voyeurism by only getting light beatings for his voyeurism instead of jail time
- Refusing to express his feelings about anything, even when Naru confesses love to him

**PUNISHMENT:** Ripped asunder by the National Organization of Women.



WATCH IT! I JUST GOT A PEDICURE!



## 5 MINMEI (Robotech)

Her songs might have stopped an interstellar war, but thousands of boys in the '80s couldn't forgive her for toying with Rick Hunter's heart.

### CRIMES:

- Promoting the idea that half of woman are evil manipulators to impressionable boys
- Forgetting that high notes are reserved for sopranos
- Scarring an alien race when her image was projected thousands of feet tall in the middle of a space battle

**PUNISHMENT:** Lynn Kyle, the guy she dumped Rick for, should be allowed to pelt her with empty gin bottles.

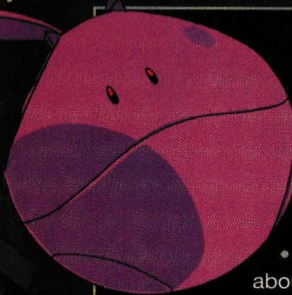
## 3 HARO (Gundam SEED)

It's enough that Haro is one of the cutest things ever made with a screwdriver, but do mechanical sidekicks really need to talk? In such a squeaky voice? And constantly beg for attention?

### CRIMES:

- Functioning as an obnoxious tape recorder that repeats everything it hears
- Trying to provide unfunny comic relief in a series about the grim reality of war
- Failing to have an easily identifiable OFF button

**PUNISHMENT:** Haro's hardware needs to be upgraded...with a hammer.



## 2 SHINJI (Evangelion)

In the future, mankind will be saved not by superheroes, but by whiny little kids in robots. More emo than a bucket of tears, 14-year-old Shinji is best skilled at hating himself.

### CRIMES:

- Causing the end of the world just because daddy didn't hug him enough
- Refusing to pilot EVA-01 and save the innocent from certain death so he could cry more
- Being the whiniest giant robot pilot in Japan — and that's really saying something

**PUNISHMENT:** Lock him in a room where there's nobody to listen to his excessive whining, and the problem will take care of itself. Remember, it's "down the tracks," not "across the road," Shinji!



IF THEY SERVE TATER TOTS AT LUNCH, I'M SO NOT SAVING THE WORLD.

## 4 KAGOME & INUYASHA (Inuyasha)

Sometimes bad things come in pairs. Kagome and Inuyasha are great but they've played the pretending-not-to-like-each-other-but-really-liking-each-other for way too long, and frankly, they both need to be put out of our misery.

### CRIMES:

- Crowning themselves drama queen and drama king and subjecting viewers to their Reign of Tears
- Creating a worldwide phenomenon of eye-rolling every time they pretend to hate one another
- Conveniently forgetting every step forward they take in their relationship by the next episode

**PUNISHMENT:** The only just thing is to give them each other's hearts — Temple of Doom style.



LEAVE ROOM FOR AMBIGUITY!

DIGNITY ARMAGEDDON!



## 1 MIAKA (Fushigi Yuugi)

Miaka has the power to save a country from war and destruction. All she has to do is bumble her way around ancient China and get fawned over by a league of pretty boys!

### CRIMES:

- Single-handedly leading a crack team of hyper-competent, super-powered bishonen to their untimely deaths
- Constantly subjecting the audience to super-deformed scenes of her floating through food she'd like to eat. Put down the fork, fatty.
- Whining, crying, screwing up, saying incredibly stupid things and yet still capturing the heart of every man she makes eye contact with, even the transsexual one

**PUNISHMENT:** Dropped down a bottomless pit. No wait, that's too nice. Locked in an iron maiden? No, then we can't see her in pain. Oh, we just can't decide! Okay, okay, drawn and quartered. Then everyone's happy.

ai

Freelance writer Bamboo Dong also keeps a list of her least favorite ducks in the park.



# F THE FORGING OF FAFNER

DIRECTOR NOBUYOSHI HABARA AND  
'**ANIME INSIDER**' BRING YOU THE MYTH,  
METHOD AND MADNESS BEHIND '**FAFNER**'

BY SUMMER MULLINS

**A**n untried high-school boy pilots a giant robot in order to save the world? Yeah, it's the oldest story in the book...and that's *exactly* why you have to watch it.

These days, mecha shows are so popular that success lies in taking classic elements and making them new again. And with projects like *End of Evangelion* under its belt, studio Xebec knew how to get the job done. It brought together director Nobuyoshi Habara (*D.N. Angel*) and character designer Hisashi Hirai (*Gundam SEED*) to create something both familiar and new. With that kind of talent behind it, *Fafner* runs like a finely tuned machine, relentless in its task—to make you question your relationship with humanity.

With a series as epic as *Fafner*, a regular episode guide just won't do—so we tracked down Habara-san himself to shed a little light on *Fafner*'s behind-the-scenes action, and did a bit of research on *Fafner*'s mythic references on our own so that you're fully prepped for when Geneon releases the first DVD in July.

**SPOILER ALERT!** This article details a generous portion of *Fafner*'s staggering secrets, so if you don't want to be spoiled, stop reading—the rest of you, strap yourselves in and get ready to launch!







**FOOTSTEPS OF GIANTS (L to R)**  
Maya, Kazuki and Soushi fight to  
protect their "Island of Giants."

**TO THE FUTURE VIEWERS OF FAFNER:**

WELCOME TO TATSUMIYA ISLAND! IT IS AN ISLAND DEPICTED IN THE TIME OF JAPAN'S SHOWA PERIOD [1926-1989]. FROM THIS MOMENT ON, YOU ARE THE INHABITANTS OF TATSUMIYA ISLAND. THESE WARM AND NOSTALGIC SCENES WILL NO DOUBT STRIKE A DEEP CHORD IN YOU SOMEWHERE. AND SO, COME, STAND AND FACE YOUR NEWLY CREATED FATE TOGETHER WITH OUR HERO, KAZUKI MAKABE. AND AS FOR THE FUTURE..?

FAFNER IS A TALE COMPOSED OF 26 EPISODES. YET AT THE SAME TIME, THIS SERIES IS NOT THE WHOLE STORY OF FAFNER. THERE EXIST MANY EPISODES IN CD AND BOOK FORM THAT CANNOT BE SEEN ON TV. THERE ARE ALSO MANY PARTS OF THE STORY THAT HAVE NOT YET BEEN DEPICTED. SO PLEASE BE ON THE LOOK-OUT FOR MORE OF FAFNER IN MANY OTHER MEDIA FORMS TO COME. I TRULY HOPE THAT TATSUMIYA ISLAND WILL BECOME LIKE A SECOND HOME TO YOU.

**NOBUYOSHI HABARA**





**AERIAL ASSAULT** Maya (L) and Kazuki enjoy the best view of Tatsumiya Island aboard their Fafners.

## 1 PARADISE [BEGINNING]

Kazuki Makabe and his fellow high school students of sleepy Tatsumiya Island are pumping classmate Soushi for information about his trip to Tokyo. After all, he's the only one of them who's ever left the island! When alien enemies called Festum suddenly attack, the kids get the surprise of their lives—the island transforms into a mobile defense base, and their parents take up battle stations!

**HABARA'S COMMENTS:** "It had been planned that another 'robot anime' director would be in charge of *Fafner*, but then before I knew it, I was picked to be the director! I was a little apprehensive at first, since I had very little experience in this type of work, but I was blessed with a wonderful staff, so it turned out to be a great experience for me."

## 2 NOTICE [LIFE]

To fight the enemy Festum, the island's leaders decide to activate one of the Fafner, humanoid weapons designed to merge with the pilot for greater accuracy. But the first pilot sent out is killed and the person with the next greatest resonance with the Fafner is...Kazuki!

**LEGENDARY LORE:** In Norse mythology, Fafner was a giant dragon who guarded a hoard of precious treasure.

## 3 LABYRINTH [TRUTH]

The adults draft new pilot trainees and discuss the profound changes that are caused by piloting the Fafner. The kids discover that Japan was destroyed in a war with aliens but Tatsumiya Island was hidden from the entire world. Meanwhile, Kazuki finds a strange girl sleeping in the depths of the facility but is summoned to distract a passing Neo UN plane and battle a Festum at the same time!

**HABARA'S COMMENTS:** "The heroes of the story, unaware of the situation, get pulled into a battle and end up realizing that the place they had called home had really been disguised under the pretenses of a false peace."

## 4 FLIGHT [EMBARKMENT]

Kazuki pilots the Fafner while Soushi guides him by neural link. The Neo UN plane is unwittingly involved in the battle with the

Festum and against orders, Kazuki helps them. When the battle goes badly, Kazuki is saved by the mysterious girl beneath the island, who actually operates the island's defense system!

**LEGENDARY LORE:** The navigational system operated by Soushi is called Siegfried, which is the name of the legendary Norse hero who does not feel fear.

## 5 PROMISE [OATH]

After discovering the island, the Neo UN strong-arms Tatsumiya's leaders into handing over the Fafner for their fight against the Festum. When Kazuki's sickly classmate Shouko collapses, he visits her in the infirmary but is called away yet again to defend the island.

**HABARA'S COMMENTS:** "The landscape of Tatsumiya Island was created by using several different views of Japan. They are not views from downtown Tokyo or even the more historically intense views from Kyoto, but I searched for and ultimately used far more heart-warming scenes with a country feel."

## 6 ASCENSION [SACRIFICE]

While Kazuki is fighting a Festum and assisting the Neo UN, yet another Festum attacks. Although she's been refusing to fight, Shouko steals the Fafner that was being prepared for delivery to the Neo UN and goes into battle to help Kazuki—and dies protecting the island.

**LEGENDARY LORE:** Alvis's various self-destruct systems are called Fenrir, after the great Norse wolf foretold to destroy the world.

## 7 DYSFUNCTION [PARENT AND CHILD]

Kouyou, who had secretly been in love with Shouko, snaps under the strain of his jealous emotions and the Fafner training. Another island like Tatsumiya is detected and an expedition mounted to explore it.

**LEGENDARY LORE:** The Arcadian Project, which built several secret islands like Tatsumiya, is named after Arcadia, an ancient Greek region that came to represent pastoral paradise.

## 8 DISCORD [KOUYOU]

Kariya, advisor to the island's director, uncovers some surprising secrets beneath the new island, including a young boy similar to the girl





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# 'FAFNER' WHO'S WHO

## MEET THE KIDS WHO AREN'T ALL RIGHT



### KAZUKI

Genetically most suited to pilot a Fafner, Kazuki is also the Alvis director's son and quite a popular high school student. He wants to protect everyone on the island but is not so good at protecting himself.



### SOUSHI

Polite and proper, Soushi prefers philosophical monologues to discussion, and he knows more about what's going on than any other kid on the island. He's blind in one eye, which prevents him from piloting.



### SHOUKO

Kazuki's cheerful classmate hasn't been able to attend school in years due to an unknown illness. An avowed pacifist, she can't bring herself to harm others even in self-defense.



### MAYA

Shouko's best friend. She's kind and reserved, but turns out to be one of the best pilots after it's revealed that her sister faked Maya's test data to save Maya from having to be a pilot.



### KOUYOU

Kazuki's classmate and Shouko's secret admirer, he's generally timid but changes drastically after Shouko's death and his infection by a Festum.



### SAKURA

A tough but sweet classmate of Kazuki. She is only fighting for her father, who died protecting the island and doesn't work well under pressure.



### AKANE

Kazuki's long-absent mother. She seems to be working all sides of the conflict. Akane was voluntarily assimilated by a Festum in an attempt to foster understanding.



### KARIYA

Kazuki's teacher and advisor to Tatsumiya's director. She betrays the island but later manages to redeem herself. ■ SM



FAFNER MARK ELF

beneath Tatsumiya! But when Kariya foolishly triggers the boy's escape, he starts assimilating her group and the island is overrun with Festum.

**LEGENDARY LORE:** One class of Festum is called Grendel, after the evil monster battled by Beowulf in the epic Anglo-Saxon poem.

## 9 ASSIMILATE [FAREWELL]

Kazuki and Soushi fight the Festum that used to be the core of the island while others activate the island's self-destruct mechanism. Kouyou rushes to rescue those trapped underground, but ends up confronting a Festum.

**HABARA'S COMMENTS:** "I wanted to express the feeling that the characters were really alive, and bring about a feeling of realism to the space they were living in—not over-exaggerate the everyday things."

## 10 DISASSEMBLE [CHANCE ENCOUNTER]

Kouyou is saved from complete assimilation but imprisoned because he's been contaminated by the Festum. It's revealed that Kazuki still feels guilty for blinding Soushi's left eye when they were kids. Later, Kazuki sees the terrifying physical effects of piloting a Fafner.

**LEGENDARY LORE:** Odin, father of the Norse gods, gave up his left eye in exchange for the ability to see the future.

## 11 HUMAN ARMY [OLD AND NEW]

Horrified by the changes happening to him, Kazuki runs away from the island with Kariya, but the Festum follow. They're saved by a Fafner that apparently belongs to the Neo UN, and Kariya turns out to be a spy!

**HABARA'S COMMENTS:** "Of course, I am aware of the correlation between the political situations [of *Fafner* and current politics]. However, I believe in a much brighter future for all of us than that of this story."

## 12 IMPATIENCE [NONEXISTENCE]

With Kazuki taken by the Neo UN, two of his classmates are rushed into battle. Piloting their Fafners changes them much faster than Kazuki, and they go psychotic, but not before successfully defending the island.

**LEGENDARY LORE:** The Nothung model Fafner is named after the sword of legendary Norse hero Siegfried, which he used to slay a dragon.

## 13 FESTUM [FESTUM]

Kazuki is shocked to discover his absent mother in league with the Neo UN! She reveals that the Festum almost conquered Earth by dropping spores that rendered humanity infertile, but a few scientists created test tube babies by splicing Festum and human



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**KILLER STYLE** Kazuki and Maya sport the latest fashion in plugsuits.

DNA...and Kazuki's one of them.

**LEGENDARY LORE:** The Festum formerly known as Akane is called Mjolnir, which is the name of Norse thunder god Thor's hammer that called lightning.

## 14 AWAKENING [CAPTURE]

Two of Kazuki's friends leave to rescue him from the Neo UN, bringing with them a new Fafner unit. At the same time, the Neo UN attacks Tatsumiya Island to gain control of its core. The island's commander refuses to use the Fafner against humans and surrenders the island.

**HABARA'S COMMENTS:** "The first half of the series is comparatively

calm and quiet. It contains the 'interval' which is so unique to Japanese film. The second half of the series brings an overwhelming force, a number of secrets that are made clear and the gradual intensification of battle scenes."

## 15 MEMORIES [SCREAM]

The core of the island—the mysterious girl beneath Tatsumiya—breaks free to avoid capture by the Neo UN search team, and it's revealed she can communicate with other Festum to a degree.

**HABARA'S COMMENTS:** "I searched for a technique that would leave a lot to the imagination and not dwell on obvious explanations. This type of expression is inordinately difficult in animation, but with it, the viewers can make up their own explanations to the motives of the characters and enjoy the series that much more."

## 16 FRIENDS [WELCOME HOME]

The core reveals itself to be Tsubaki, Soushi's long-absent little sister! When a fresh wave of Festum attack, she chooses to sacrifice herself for Tatsumiya island, but Kazuki returns in the new Fafner in time to save her.

**LEGENDARY LORE:** The cores of the islands are called Valkyrie, a name shared by the warrior goddess daughters of Norse god Odin.

## 17 SURVIVAL [TRICK]

Kazuki awaits punishment for running away from the Neo UN, whose general manages to activate the island's self-destruct sequence. Tsubaki stops the process by safely detonating the island's missiles.

**LEGENDARY LORE:** The Brunhilde defense system controlled by Tsubaki is named after one particularly disobedient daughter of Odin.

## 18 FATHER [MEMORIES]

The Neo UN forces retreat, but some soldiers choose to stay behind and start a new life on Tatsumiya. The students try to find a moment of peace by going to the beach; meanwhile one of the doctors realizes Maya's files have been faked—her family has been hiding her piloting ability!

**LEGENDARY LORE:** The Lindwurm launch mechanism shares its name with another mythical Norse dragon!

## 19 MAYA [LOOK]

Maya is cleared for Fafner training. She's remarkably good, but the process unbalances her mentally and everyone decides to take a break for family time. However, that evening the Festum attack again and Maya joins in the battle!

**HABARA'S COMMENTS:** "The characters do not just move around on the screen, but sit deep in thought. Even at times when the characters aren't on screen, they still seem to be alive and breathing and converse accordingly."

## 20 LAMPLIGHT [LIGHT]

Kouyou escapes from confinement after a memorial ceremony for those killed in the most recent battles. His friends debate whether they should kill him as a Festum threat or let him go free, but after seeing a girl dressed in Shouko's old clothes, Kouyou collapses into a coma.

# "ARE YOU THERE?"

## THE MEANING BEHIND THE MOST ASKED QUESTION IN 'FAFNER'



**SPHINX FESTUM**

"Anata wa soko ni imasu ka?" mysteriously asks a weak radio signal in *Fafner's* first episode. It translates into "Are you there?" which doesn't sound so mysterious—until the same question crops up again and again throughout the series, mainly asked by the invading Festum aliens. Children are told that whatever they do, they must not answer the question—nor will director Nobuyoshi explain the question! However, his silence might have something to do with the recently announced prequel to *Fafner*, titled *Fafner ~ Single Program ~ Right of Left*, which is planned for a 2006 release.

*Right of Left* will explore the events leading up to the events of the first series (and perhaps the meaning behind the question) through the story of main characters Kuramae and Soushi. Even though it will take place one year before the beginning of *Fafner*, viewers can expect big revelations about *Fafner's* characters, the nature of the Festum, and the true meaning of the Festum's question. ■ SM





**WHEN FAFNERS ATTACK**  
Tatsumiya's forces  
clash with the New UN.

**LEGENDARY LORE:** Alberich, the system by which parents are chosen for the test-tube children, shares its name with a character in Wagner's opera *Nibelungenlied* who creates a ring to conquer the world by sacrificing love.

## 21 SAKURA [FUTURE]

With more trained pilots, Tatsumiya has a stronger defense, so the pilots are cleared for a night out. Everyone enjoys the evening except Sakura, who has secretly been spinning out of control. She is quietly assimilated as she sits on a playground thinking about the war.

**HABARA'S COMMENTS:** "The core appeal of *Fafner* is that all people are alive and understand one another. In the story itself, I deal with 'the importance of life,' 'the thoughts of those left behind' and the idea of 'what is one's real family?'"

## 22 PROTECT [POWER]

The pilots learn about Sakura's assimilation shortly before a new Festum appears, one that can deflect their attacks. Kazuki's classmate Mamoru teams up with Kazuki to fight it, but dies in the struggle.

**LEGENDARY LORE:** The pilot of the Fafner is referred to as "Nibelungen," the dwarves from whom Siegfried stole the ring of power.

## 23 PILLAGE [DECOY]

The Neo UN attempts to make a new Fafner, but the experiment goes terribly wrong; Kariya gets assimilated and runs amok. Festum appear at the North Pole and the global climate island abruptly turns cold. Soushi is captured by Festum, while more of his classmates die in combat.

**HABARA'S COMMENTS:** "I grappled hard with the problem of killing off some of the characters and so I've prepared reasoning behind each decision. But I still ask you to watch each episode and form an opinion for yourself!"

## 24 DIALOGUE [MIR]

Kazuki and the other pilots plan to rescue Soushi, who has been taken to the North Pole by the Festum. Tsubaki receives information about the Festum's weaknesses from a double agent, and the pilots set out to save Soushi—and the world.

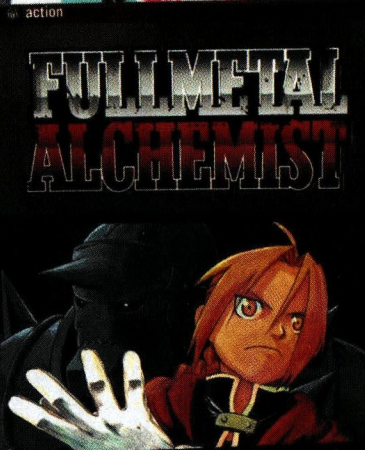
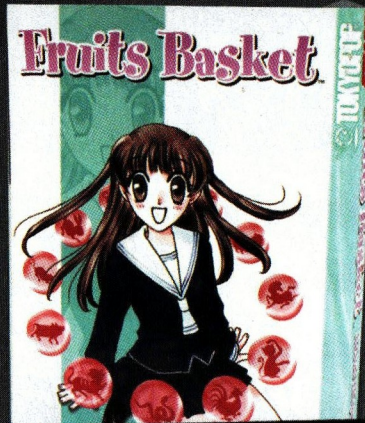
**LEGENDARY LORE:** Alvis, the name of Tatsumiya's underground base, means "all-seeing." It's the name of the dwarf who forged weapons for the Norse gods deep underground.

## 25 & 26 AZURE [SKY]

Kazuki and company discover that the Festum have half-assimilated Soushi to learn their battle tactics! Tsubaki expends the last of her life force defending the pilots and they ultimately defeat the Festum. Soushi opts to voluntarily join the Festum in the hope of creating understanding and eventually peace between humans and Festum.

**HABARA'S COMMENTS:** "If after watching the whole series through, you are able to watch it again from the beginning, I believe you can enjoy it from a completely different point of view, perhaps that of the hero father or the heroine mother. At this point, you would probably be in the position to be able to answer for yourself: 'I'm here! I really do exist!'" 

*Does associate editor Summer Mullins really exist? If not, who's cashing her paychecks?*



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# ALUCARD TRICK

Geneon brings 'Hellsing' back from the dead with a brand-new OVA

It's hard to kill a vampire. Although the fan-favorite *Hellsing* anime seemed dead after the 13-episode series from studio Gonzo ended in 2001, a legion of fans have prayed for the resurrection of the vampire-turned-vampire hunter Alucard—and Geneon Entertainment has answered those prayers.

Geneon announced a new straight-to-DVD animation titled *Hellsing: Ultimate OVA Series* at the French marketing trade show MIPTV in April; the series will be presided over by *Hellsing* manga-ka Kouta Hirano himself, who has on several occasions publicly registered discontent with Gonzo's 2001 TV version.

Although Gonzo is credited as a producer in the new series, the animation will be handled by Satelight, the studio behind *Macross Zero* and *Heat Guy J*. The OVA series will be directed by Tomokazu Tokoro (*Haibane Renmei*), and scripted by the fan-favorite Hideyuki Kurata—creator/writer of *Read or Die*. The episodes will clock in at 35 minutes a pop, but no final episode count has been revealed.

Although plot details are thin, the promotional material distributed at MIPTV promises that *Ultimate* will be based directly on Hirano's manga, unlike the final half of the original series. The *Hellsing* manga is dominated



**BACK IN BLACK...AND RED** Vampire Alucard returns for new, more bloodthirsty adventures.

by the story of an epic, blood-spattered battle between the Protestant, vampire-slaying Hellsing organization and a warmongering villainous group of mind-blowingly powerful undead Nazis calling themselves "Millennium." Badass bloodsucker Alucard, an all-powerful vampire who also happens to be Vlad the Impaler, works as a servant to the Hellsing organization, and he's got his hands full with the super-powered undead driving Millennium's revolution. If the new series follows the manga

storyline, expect to see the entire cast of the first series back in action, and the streets of London run red with Nazi blood.

The original *Hellsing* TV series sparked a sensation and remains one of the best-selling anime titles on DVD. Although no Japanese or U.S. release date has been announced, it's a sure bet that the series will find its way to our shores shortly after its Japanese debut thanks to the original show's enduring popularity. ■ **Zac Bertschy**

## BLOODSELLS

The five goriest moments from the 'Hellsing' manga

**Kouta Hirano, *Hellsing* creator, wants the new *Hellsing* OVA series to be one of the most violent anime ever created. Based on the Dark Horse manga, here's a taste of what you might see!**

**GETTING AHEAD** When Alucard is shot to bits by Millennium, he sinks his fangs into the neck of the nearest soldier and rips his head

clean off...with his mouth! **RIPPED APART** Millennium marksman Rip Van Winkle takes over a British destroyer, marking it with a huge swastika painted in the blood of the ship's crew. **LEND A HAND** Alucard shows up on the captured destroyer and grows hundreds of writhing arms that tear the Millennium invaders into bite-size pieces.

**GUN SHY** Rip Van Winkle's specialty is a colossal rifle...a rifle Alucard takes great pleasure in ramming straight through her heart, pinning her to the wall so he can drink her blood. **ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE** Every man, woman and child in London is maimed, impaled and decapitated by the Millennium army. It's a slaughter of epic proportions! ■ **ZB**





# STARTING OVA

Studio Gonzo heads straight to DVD with three new OVAs on the way

They say there's no rest for the wicked—which means Studio Gonzo must be very, very evil. In addition to all their TV anime series (including *Trinity Blood*, *Basilisk* and *Speedgrapher*) the company recently announced several direct-to-DVD projects sure to please anime fans. OVA sequels to the *Burst Angel* and *Kaleido Star* anime series and an OVA adaptation of the bestselling *Murdock Scramble* novel are all in the works, with release dates spanning through next year.

The *Burst Angel* OVA (whose TV series is currently being released by FUNimation on DVD) continues right from the TV series' surprise, cliffhanger ending, although the content is tightly under wrap. "We can tell you this," reveals Jonathan Baumgardner, FUNimation's *Burst Angel* brand manager. "Knowing how great *Burst Angel* is and the dedication that Gonzo puts into its series—this OVA is going to kick butt."

Fewer details are available for *Kaleido Star Good da yo! Good!!*, which is the second *Kaleido Star* OVA, and a sequel to *Kaleido Star New Wings Extra Stage*. The original staff of the show—including director Junichi Sato (*Slayers Premium*)—has returned for this summer 2005 release, which promises to introduce new characters.

Author To Ubukata, who has worked with Gonzo in the past on *Fafner*, will write the script for the studio's adaptation of his cyberpunk novel *Murdock Scramble*. Another Gonzo heavy-hitter, Masafumi Soejima (*Animatrix*, *Gankutsuou*), will direct. The novel about—in the author's own words—"a girl, her enemies and a weapon" won Japan's equivalent of the Hugo

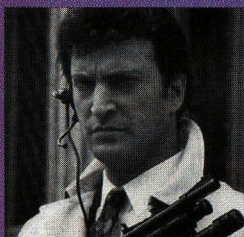
Award in 2003 and is slated for a 2006 release. ■ Summer Mullins



**ENCORE PRESENTATIONS** The *Burst Angels* (above) join *Kaleido Star*'s Sora to practice for their new gigs on DVD.

## LIPSERVICE

**RICHARD EPCAR**, voice of *Ghost in the Shell*'s Batou



Richard Epcar, anime's veteran basso profundo, is one busy man. Besides his roles in *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* and *Ninja Scroll*, he's also directed or written dubs for hundreds of episodes of shows like *Lupin III* and *Fighting Spirit*, and videogames like *Shadow Hearts II*. We shamelessly stole a moment of his time to sit down and talk shop.

**You're the voice of Batou in the original *GITS* movie and the TV series. How did you manage to snag the role again?**

When they were going to do the TV series I had to audition again with a bunch of other guys! I was very relieved when I got the part. I really like playing him.

**What's been your favorite anime role so far?**

Batou is certainly one. He's very close to me in many ways. He's got a good dry sense of humor and I like that he never takes any crap. Another is Jigen in *Lupin III*. He's also a very cool guy with a dry wit. I also really enjoyed doing *Digimon* because Myotismon is me doing Dracula and Etemon is me doing Elvis—I even got to sing!

**You've done your fair share of video game voices as well—do you have a favorite?**

I really like Ziggy [from *Xenosaga*] because he's complex. There's a pathos about him. Meaty stuff.

**Having directed and acted in dubs, is there anything you've learned from being on both sides of the fence?**

I'm lucky I've been doing this a long time. I've learned that all of this is from a creative place and that you have to be open and create a comfortable environment for the actor. ■ SM



BATOU

## EASTERNEGG

**Excel Saga vol. 4**

Select "Language Setting" from the main menu and change the language to "English only." Move the cursor so that it highlights the M with a circle around it. Press right then enter to see an amusing Pedro clip. For a second Pedro short, wait until the "M.O.F.C." animation appears after the last episode, then click the Next Chapter button. ■ Rebecca Bundy





# dvdreleases JULY

## AREA 88 VOL. 1

A friend tricks Shin into signing a contract with the Asran mercenaries, costing him his career and fiancée. Now he has three choices: serve the contract, pay his way out, or flee and risk death. (ADV, \$29.98)

## BOYS OVER FLOWERS VOL. 12

In this final volume, will Tsukasa and Tsukushi finally make amends and realize they're meant for each other, or will they go their separate ways? (Viz, \$24.95)

## BURST ANGEL VOL. 2

A giant bird preys on young women and kidnaps Meg from under Jo's nose. Kyo is pulled into the kidnapping when she's injected with a secret weapon. Will Jo be able to save both girls? (FUNimation, \$29.98)

## CHRONO CRUSADE VOL. 6

Things take a turn for the worst when Rosette, Chrono and the rest of the gang finally locate Joshua. Aion makes full use of the meeting, threatening to not only kill Rosette but humanity as well. (ADV, \$29.98)

## CROMARTIE HIGH SCHOOL VOL. 3

Mechazawa has an identity crisis, and the other idiots—including aliens and gorillas—are up to their usual tricks. (ADV, \$29.98)

## D.I.C.E. VOL. 2

Jet and the D.I.C.E. F-99 crew keep themselves busy by uncovering a saboteur at the Grand Prix, visiting a mysterious planet, finding a missing artifact, and stopping an interplanetary war! (Bandai, \$14.98)

## D.I.C.E. VOL. 3

A fearsome battle between Jet and the Phantom Knight leaves the Knight with a precious artifact and crushes Jet's confidence. Things get worse when a second "battle sends Motorap-tor to the hospital. (Bandai, \$14.98)

## DRAGON BALL Z—GOHAN'S SECRET

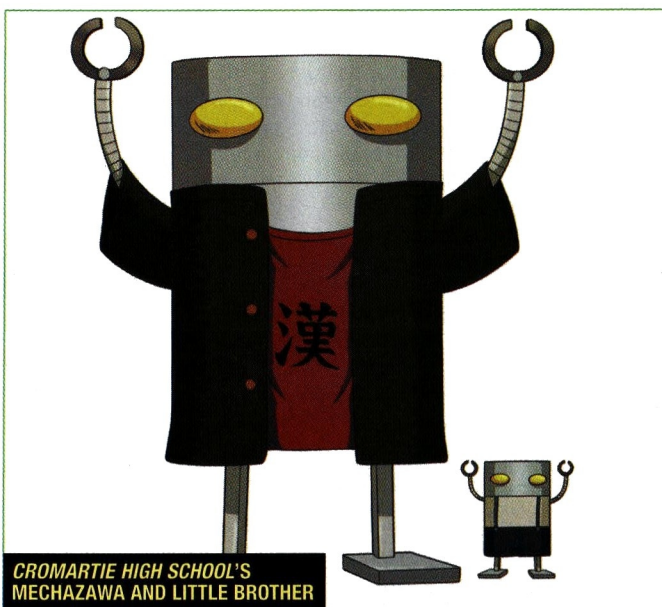
Gohan, trying to balance college and a career as a superhero, dons a costume and new name: Saiyanman! Will the disguise stick when he rushes to help his friend Videll? (FUNimation, \$19.98)

## DRAGON DRIVE VOL. 9

The gang is shocked to learn that Hideki's really a spy. As they rush towards the shrine and their final battle, they must confront some nasty looking dragons guarding the shrine. (Bandai, \$24.98)

## FAFNER VOL. 1

When the Festum attack Earth, the youth of Tatsumiya Island discover that only they have the ability to pilot the Fafner, humanity's last weapon against the god-like powers of the aliens. (Geneon, \$29.98; box, \$39.98)



CROMARTIE HIGH SCHOOL'S MECHAZAWA AND LITTLE BROTHER

## FLAME OF RECCA VOL. 4

When Kurei "invites" Recca and his friends to an ultimate warriors' competition, the gang find themselves unable to refuse. (Viz, \$24.95)

## FULL METAL PANIC? FUMOFFU VOL. 2

Sousuke deals with the challenges of uncooperative school clubs, deadly art class assignments, and chainsaw-wielding janitors in typical fashion. (ADV, \$29.98)

## FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST VOL. 4

Ed and Al search out Doctor Marco in the hopes of learning what the ex-State Alchemist knows about the Philosopher's Stone. What they discover is the truth behind the slaughter in Ishbal. (FUNimation, \$29.98)

## GALAXY RAILWAYS VOL. 1

Layla Destiny Shura has the unusual ability to see the fates of everyone who travel on the Galaxy Railways. These people have many stories to tell, and first up is Captain Manabu Yuuki! (FUNimation, \$29.98; SE, \$34.98)

## GENSHIKEN VOL. 1

College freshman Kanji searches for other otaku and discovers Genshiken, a club filled with a handful of likeminded fans obsessed with doujinshi, models, and cosplaying. (Media Blasters, \$29.95; w/box, \$34.95)

## GHOST IN THE SHELL: STAND ALONE COMPLEX VOL. 7

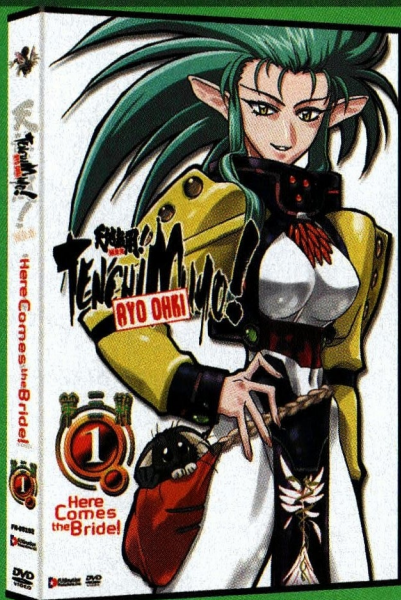
In this explosive final volume, Section 9 is on the run from the government. Kusanagi is feared dead, everyone is arrested, and still they must locate the true Laughing Man! (Bandai, \$25.98; SE, \$49.98)

## MUSTSEE

### Tenchi Muyo! Ryo Ohki OVA 3 Vol. 1

It's been five whole years since the last *Tenchi Muyo! Ryo Ohki* OVA was released in the U.S. (at the time by Pioneer, now Geneon) but FUNimation has stepped up to the plate to bring long-time fans of the series just what they've been craving. FUNimation has even managed to bring most of the original voice actors together to reprise their roles!

OVA 3 picks up right where the last one left off, with Tenchi's household in even more jeopardy thanks to two new female arrivals, including his long-lost sister (!) and his fiancée (!!). The (sometimes) friendly rivalry for his affections shares screen time with the unfolding story of Tenchi's past, as Lady Tokimi sends Z to Earth on a mission to collect information about our Jurian hero, but of course Z has his own agenda. And if you want to know more about Tenchi's mom...on July 5 you can solve the mystery with volume one, *Here Comes the Bride*, for \$29.98. ■ SM





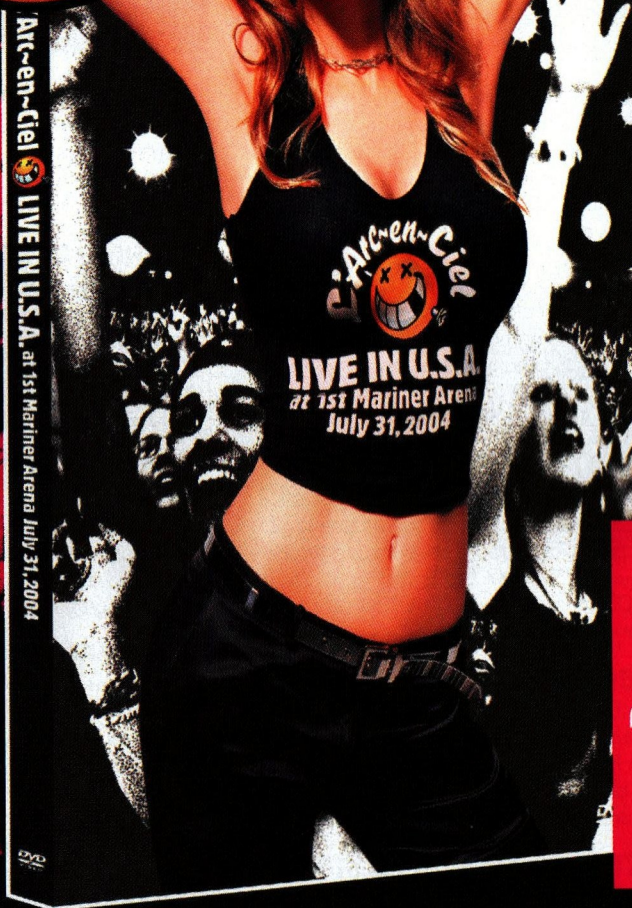
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## DISC DRIVE

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### Iriya NO Sora, UFO No Natsu

From Toei (*Dragon Ball Z*) comes the 7-disc release of a...romantic conspiracy theory? Asaba sneaks into his high school pool

on the last night of break and meets the nosebleed-prone Iriya. Little does he know that this strange girl is the key to discovering the truth about UFOs!



### Otogi-Jushi Akazukin

Merchandise Konami and studio Madhouse (*Chobits*) collaborated on this whimsical action fantasy about Akazukin, a young girl who could unite the long-divided worlds of science and magic. The Japanese DVD came with a detailed figure of Akazukin, including alternate weapons and accessories.



### Sentou Yousei Shoujo Tasukete Mave-Chan!

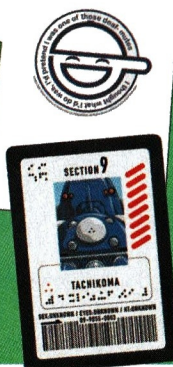
This OVA spinoff of the sci-fi fighter series *Yukikaze* is a *bishojo* comedy! Gonzo (*Chrono Crusade*) animates the story of Rei, a 17-year-old boy who's sucked into a fantasy world at his first anime event. Japan's DVD release included a PVC Mave statue, a music CD and a photo booklet. ■ SM



## FREESWAG

### Laughing Man T-shirt and Section 9 ID card

Your passport to the cyber world of *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* comes in this month's special edition release of *GITS: SAC* volume 7. Pull on this terminally cool T-shirt bearing the Laughing Man logo and clip your Section 9 ID badge to your belt, and hope no one asks for a retina scan! ■ SM



## GUNDAM SEED MOVIE I

The war between the Coordinators and Naturals has reached an all-time high. Kira Yamato becomes a Gundam pilot for the Naturals, forcing him to fight family in order to protect his friends. (Bandai, \$29.98)

## GUNSLINGER GIRL VOL. 2

While Henrietta's turning into a top-notch assassin, the other girls aren't doing so well. Problems develop during Angelina's conditioning, and Elsa's cold heart may put everyone's lives in jeopardy. (FUNimation, \$29.98)

## INITIAL D VOL. 12

Kyle takes the lead in an important race, but Ry has finally figured out his weakness. Bunta unveils the return of the Eight-Six, but Tak is unimpressed due to the lack of horsepower. (TOKYOPOP, \$19.99)

## KYO KARA MAOH! VOL. 2

Yuri begins to adjust to his new role as king, but he discovers that there's more to being king than being waited on. He must now leave his lands to recover the legendary demon blade, Morgif. (Geneon, \$24.98)

## MERMAID FOREST VOL. 1

When Yuta accidentally eats mermaid flesh, he's granted immortality. Life becomes less lonely when he rescues a young girl from mermaids intent on eating her to regain their beauty! (Geneon, \$29.98; w/box, \$34.98)

## MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM 0083 COLLECTOR'S EDITION BOX SET

This special set contains the complete series and plenty of extras. Three years after the end of the war between the Earth Federation and the Duchy of Zeon, old hostilities are flaring up again! (Bandai, \$49.98)

## OTOGI ZOSHI VOL. 3

Hikaru finally recovers the final Magatama, but war is brewing and targets her home. With battles waging on all sides, will death and betrayal destroy all Hikaru has worked to protect? (Media Blasters, \$29.95)

## PATLABOR: NEW FILES VOL. 1

Noa's dream becomes a reality when the police ask him to pilot one of their giant robots. She and others must combat the Griffin, a fearsome black robot. (CPM, \$19.95)

## PEACEMAKER VOL. 6

The tension rises as the Shinsengumi come down hard upon their enemies. Tetsu continues to suffer under the memories of his parents' murderer, as does Suzumu with under those of his sister's death. (ADV, \$29.98)

## THE PLACE PROMISED IN OUR EARLY DAYS

In an alternate present, three schoolkids try to unravel the mysteries behind a giant tower. When Sayuri falls into a coma, Hiroki and Takuya discover that it's related to the tower. (ADV, \$29.98)



STEAMBOY'S RAY STEAM

## SAMURAI CHAMPLON VOL. 4

As usual, the threesome is desperately broke. Fuu's attempt to model for money lands her in trouble, while Jin and Mugen fall in with the wrong crowd. (Geneon, \$29.98)

## SHINGU: SECRET OF THE STELLAR WARS VOL. 3

The Chosen decide to use the secret technique of Astral Deviation. Nayuta will be hurled into space to fight the enemy on her own, but the process might kill the other Chosen! (Right Stuf, \$29.95)

## STAR OCEAN EX VOL. 4

Claude finally decides to join the Armors Tournament in order to win a chance to meet Dr. Leon, who could save his planet. Will he stand a chance, however, against his surprising final opponent? (Geneon, \$29.98)

## STEAMBOY DIRECTOR'S CUT

In a steam-powered Victorian England, young inventor Ray Steam must fight to keep the powerful "steam ball" out of the hands of those who would use it for evil! (Sony Pictures, \$26.96; gift set, \$49.95)

## TOKYO UNDERGROUND VOL. 3

Shiel becomes sympathetic towards Ruri's plight and offers to be her bodyguard. He'll have his hands full protecting her from those who'd sacrifice Ruri in order to resurrect an evil dragon. (Geneon, \$29.98)

## URUSEI YATSURA OVA VOL. 5

Everyone attends the grand opening of Ryuunosuke's inn, but they soon discover that it's actually haunted! Later, Mendou hires an unusual ninja who falls in love with his sister, Ryoko! (AnimEigo, \$19.95)

## URUSEI YATSURA OVA VOL. 6

Combining the best scenes from the previous episodes with all new footage, this final DVD adds new life to each of Ryoko's guests and the personalities of the Mendou family. (AnimEigo, \$19.95)



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## POPULARITY CONTEST

Exactly how is the anime on Cartoon Network and Adult Swim doing?

Everyone knows Adult Swim is popular enough to take any girl it wants to the prom. What's surprising us now is just how popular it is.

In April, Cartoon Network spun Adult Swim off as its own network. The change is pretty much just on paper—we see the same shows on the same channel—but the difference is huge to the people sitting in offices tallying up the ratings.

Shortly after April's ratings were in, the newly liberated network reported astounding popularity. Adult Swim smashed its competition and set new records for cable TV: its audiences were the largest number of adults 18-34 years old...in the history of the medium! For six weeks straight, AS averaged a viewership of 401,000 people 18-34 years old, 244,000 of whom were men—which means that although guys are still in the majority, the network has gained a much bigger female audience since last year.

The top-rated anime program is none other than the international smash hit *Fullmetal Alchemist*, the engrossing story of two cursed brothers—Edward and Alphonse Elric—skilled in the secrets of alchemy. After failing in a forbidden ritual to resurrect the dead, the two must journey in search of the Philosopher's Stone, the only artifact that can make them whole again. "We are proud of *Fullmetal Alchemist*'s excellent ratings on Adult Swim," said FUNimation public relations representative Jeff Dronen, "but not surprised."

The anime on sister block Toonami is making strong bounds forward, too: shocking industry predictions, newcomer



**LIFE OF THE PARTY** The casts of *Zatch Bell* (above) and *Fullmetal Alchemist* (left) shine on Cartoon Network.

*Zatch Bell* has rocketed up in viewer popularity. And *One Piece* now pulls in 644,000 kids 6-11! Still, anime doesn't rank in the top five shows on Adult Swim, which are *Family Guy*, *Futurama*, *Robot Chicken*, *Harvey Birdman*, and *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*. Even bronze-placed *Robot Chicken* snags close to one million viewers!

For now, the Western animation on Cartoon Network is more popular than anime like *Fullmetal Alchemist*, but with anime staying strong in the hearts and minds of Americans—and room for more shows on the new channel—how long can that last? ■ *Christian Nutt*

## STARPOWER

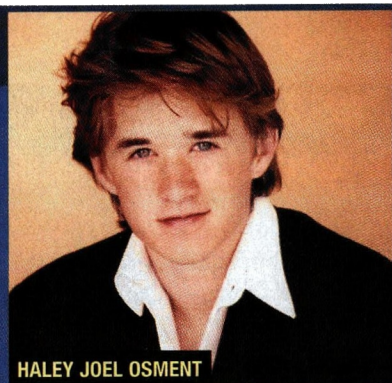
'IGPX' heads to Hollywood for its voices

Cartoon Network isn't skimping when it comes to *IGPX*. When the show, co-created by Cartoon Network and Production I.G, premieres on Toonami late this fall, the characters won't be the usual gang of voice actors. Instead, CN has turned to Hollywood for the *IGPX* cast. Lead character Takeshi will be

voiced by Haley Joel Osment (*The Sixth Sense*), who recently pulled voice acting duties as Sora from Square Enix's hit game *Kingdom Hearts*. Osment will be joined by Michelle Rodriguez (*The Fast and the Furious*), Tom Kenney (voice of *SpongeBob SquarePants*), Lance Henriksen (*Aliens*) and Luke

Skywalker himself, Mark Hamill, who's also well-known for his turn as The Joker in another Cartoon Network hit, *Batman: The Animated Series*.

"We really wanted *IGPX* to stand out from your usual anime series," explained Toonami creative director Sean Akins. ■ *CN*



HALEY JOEL OSMENT

FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST © HUNTER/HAKAWA SQUARE ENIX; ANK BONES; DENZU; ZATCH BELL © 2003, 2005 MAKOTO HAKU / SHOGAKUKAN; TOEI ANIMATION; HALEY JOEL OSMENT © HALEY JOEL OSMENT.COM





BLOOD'S SAYA

## 'BLOOD' REIGN

Anime's favorite vampire slayer returns on TV

Vampires are afraid of garlic, crosses and Japanese schoolgirls—at least when that schoolgirl is the sword-swinging Saya, star of *Blood: The Last Vampire*. Which means vampires the world over are quaking in their coffins at the news that Production I.G.'s acclaimed *Blood* movie is finally getting a new life on Japanese TV.

For the *Blood+* (pronounced "Blood Plus") series, Junichi Fujisaki (script writer for both of I.G.'s upcoming CLAMP movies *Tsubasa* and *XXXHOLIC*) will take the director's wheel. Apparently, the series will be a prequel to the *Blood* movie. Vampire-in-schoolgirl's-clothing Saya will return, joined by mysterious cello player Hagi in her battle against the evil, vampire-like Chiropterans.

At a press conference at Tokyo University, original *Blood* movie co-producer and acclaimed director Mamoru Oshii announced that the show will air during the coveted Saturday 6 p.m. primetime spot used by other mega-popular series like *Gundam Seed* and *Fullmetal Alchemist*.

■ Wade-Hahn Chan

## AN 'APPLE' A WEEK

Shirow's Deunan and Briareos reassigned to TV

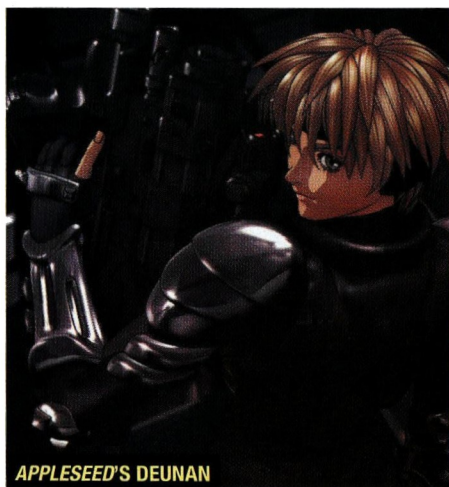
Keeping a utopia running smoothly is tough work for cops like *Appleseed*'s Deunan and Briareos, but keeping fans happy is significantly easier, even for a notoriously unprolific manga-ka like Masamune Shirow.

Following the recent CG cel-shaded movie, Shirow's *Appleseed* will become a 26-episode series that will begin airing in summer 2006. Coincidentally, that's around the same time that the second

*Appleseed* movie—produced by John Woo of *Hard Boiled* and *Mission: Impossible II* fame—should hit the big screen.

The TV series will be more closely based upon the popular manga by Masamune Shirow (*Ghost in the Shell*), which follows the exploits of seasoned police veterans Deunan Knute and cyborg Briareos Hecatonchires as they try to maintain order in their futuristic paradise home of Olympus.

The TV series and movies might be a bittersweet joy for fans of Shirow's original *Appleseed* manga; although it was first published in 1985, he still has not completed it. ■ WC



APPLESEED'S DEUNAN

## TUNEINTOKYO

The latest anime debuts on Japanese TV

### EUREKA SEVEN

From studio Bones (*Fullmetal Alchemist*, *RahXephon*). Renton is a 14-year-old boy who lives a boring life helping his mechanic dad. One particularly unlucky day a giant robot crashes into their house and a blue-haired girl named Eureka emerges and requests immediate repairs. Of course, even more trouble in the form of the totalitarian government is following closely behind.



### LOVELESS

Based on the shonen-ai manga by Kouga Yun. Young Ritsuka has a tough life—his big brother Seimei was murdered, his mom hates him, and now a strange guy who claims to have known Seimei and is just a little too touchy is following him around. Just when he thinks he's got a handle on Soubi,

he's attacked by magic-wielders in the park and Soubi must protect him! Ritsuka begins to uncover the truth about his brother's mysterious life.

### SOUSEI NO AQUARION

The brainchild of mecha-god Shoji Kawamori (*Escaflowne*, *Macross*). Mankind is in serious trouble. When the polar ice-caps melted they revealed a 12,000-year-old Atlantis

packed with terrors that have decimated the planet. Now kids scramble out their existence in the ruins and specially selected candidates operate the Machine Angels, weapons that protect the cities. Unwilling street rat Apollo is fingered as the latest candidate, but first he has to prove himself to the rest of the disbelieving pilots.



### TSUBASA CHRONICLE

Princess Sakura lives a happy life in the Clow Kingdom, but her burgeoning feelings for archaeologist Syaoran trigger a mysterious device under excavation, causing her memories to scatter to different dimensions! Syaoran must team up with other characters from creative team CLAMP's universes to restore the feathers of her memory. Unfortunately, the price requested by the witch who can launch him through the dimensions is Sakura's memory of his love! ■ Summer Mullins

APPLESEED: MASAMUNE SHIROW / SEISHINSHA / APPLESEED FILM PARTNERS. BLOOD: THE LAST VAMPIRE © PRODUCTION I.G. / SHINSEI. LOVELESS: KOUGA YUN / YOUNG GANGAN. SOUSEI NO AQUARION: SHOJI KAWAMORI / SATLIGHT / PROJECT AQUARION. TSUBASA CHRONICLE: CLAMP • KODANSHA / NIK • NEP.



# ROBOT ROCKS

Range Murata's latest manga experiment attacks the U.S.

Leave it to Range Murata, the legendary designer behind the hit Geneon anime series *Last Exile*, to shake up the manga industry and leave it rattled.

His latest project, *Robot*, is something truly revolutionary; a large-format, full-color manga anthology that serves as a showcase for exceptionally talented but mostly unknown manga artists that Murata has hand-picked, in addition to manga superstars who happen to be Murata's personal favorites. "I had been thinking that I wanted a completely new arena for Japan's manga-influenced illustrators, including myself, to display their work," said Murata. "It was sort of like, if nobody's going to do it, then I'll just go ahead."

The book, released by Digital Manga Publishing this July, is an edgy, groundbreaking collection of cutting-edge manga from Japan's least-known but most talented artists. "There are so many people in this world that couldn't get into this business even with tremendous talent," Murata continued, "because they just couldn't adjust to the format or for various restrictions and personal reasons. These things are inevitable, but I just wanted to let it be known to as many people as possible that there are people like this, and I'm hoping that this book would become a sort of catalog for this purpose. I hope that the readers find the different colors and means of expression employed by each author intriguing, and that they find value in this variety."

*Robot* isn't only about unknowns; also invited to work in the world of brilliant color was world-famous artist Yoshitoshi ABe, the man behind *Serial Experiments Lain* and *Haibane Renmei*. Murata himself contributed

a short story as well as a handful of full-color illustrations. In short, there's something for everyone, and that's just the way Murata wants it.

"One of Digital Manga Publishing's (DMP) strongest accomplishments in this industry has always been to do things different and exciting,"

remarked Issac Lew, director of sales and new business development at DMP. "The *Robot* series is no different as its full color and large formatting manga breaks the traditional manga mold that's saturating American bookshelves. Don't be surprised if this catches on like wildfire!" ■ **Zac Bertschy**



**DO THE ROBOT** Murata's artwork graces both the cover of *Robot* (above) and the interior (left).

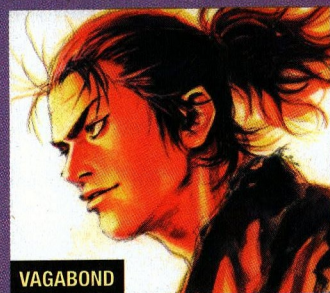
## QUICKREADS

News briefs from the bookshelves

**PORTABLE SEA** American manga publisher Seven Seas recently hit it big by offering the first chapter of its titles *No Man's Land*, *Amazing Agent Luna*, *Blade for Barter* and *Last Hope* for download to Sony's new portable game console, the PSP. The manga can be viewed sequentially on the console, and so far has seen over 12,000 downloads.

**OWNING JAPAN** Dark Horse Comics recently announced that it licensed the hit manga series *Japan*, created by Buronson (responsible for *Fist of the North Star* and its various sequels) and Kentaro Miura (famous for *Berserk*, also published by Dark Horse). Expect the title to hit bookstores around August 10.

**PRODIGAL VAGABOND** Takehiko Inoue's celebrated samurai action manga *Vagabond*, published in America by Viz, finally returned to publication after a long hiatus in the pages of Japanese manga anthology *Morning*. *Real*, Inoue's other hit manga series, is also being relaunched in *Young Jump* in Japan. ■ **ZB**



**VAGABOND**



# FALL IN

**TOKYOPOP brightens up autumn with a whopping eight smash licenses**

**B**reak-dancing samurai, gigantic monsters, and...court wizard Donald Duck? This fall TOKYOPOP is bringing eight brand-new titles straight from Japan that are sure to set the shelves on fire.



KAMI KAZE

First up is *Kingdom Hearts* by Shiro Amano, a manga series based on the iconic Disney and Square Enix smash hit videogame of the same name. The story stars a fourteen-year-old boy named Sora, whose idyllic life comes to an abrupt end after a violent storm hits his island home and two friends go missing. He sets out on a quest to find them, teaming up with powerful companions on a journey through Disney's legendary filmography.

Much to the delight of its many fans, the popular hip-hop-inspired *Samurai*

*Champloo's* manga version has also been licensed by TOKYOPOP. Drawn by Masaru Gotsubo, it retraces the exploits of the wild, animalistic Mugen and the stoic, traditional Jin as they assist clumsy ex-waitress Fuu in her search for the mysterious Sunflower Samurai.

The highly anticipated *Kami Kaze* by Satoshi Shiki is an exciting and violent supernatural action drama about 88 beasts released from a thousand years' confinement. The story follows a band of modern-day warriors, descendants of an ancient clan, who arise to fight this menace.

COME WITH ME ON MY SEARCH FOR EVEN BIGGER PANTS!

All three titles, along with *Earthian* by Yun Kouga and *Life* by Keiko

Suenobu, will hit the shelves this November. In addition, TOKYOPOP will be releasing *Kamichama Karin* by Koge Donbo (creator of *Di Gi Charat*) and *Kanpai!* by Maki Murakami in September, and *Lights Out!* by Myung-Jin Lee and *Spiral* by Kyo Shirodaira and Eita Mizuno in October.

■ Casey Brienza

**SORA SORA SORA** *Kingdom Heart's* Sora gets ready to kick some Disney butt.



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# mangareleases JULY

## AH! MY GODDESS VOL. 21

Peorth wants out of her child's body, but Velsper no longer has the wherewithal to change her back. Who should she go to for help out of her predicament? Kosuke Fujishima (Dark Horse, \$10.95)

## BASTARD! VOL. 8

Three years after the climatic battle between DS and Abigail's ultimate weapon, new heroes and villains go head-to-head as apocalypse looms on the horizon. Kazushi Hagiwara (Viz, \$9.95)

## BATTLE ROYALE VOL. 13

Only five students left! At last, the two students with the biggest body counts, Kazuo Kiriya and Mitsuko Souma, face off in a no-holds-barred battle for victory. Koshun Takami and Masayuki Taguchi (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

## BERSERK VOL. 8

The epic war of Midland and Chuder continues. Griffith is unstoppable on the battlefield with Guts beside him, but battles of intrigue might be a different story... Kentaro Miura (Dark Horse, \$13.95)

## CASE CLOSED VOL. 6

The boy detective matches wits with the Phantom Thief and bails the Junior Justice League out when it bites off more than it can chew. Gosho Aoyama (Viz, \$9.99)

## CHEEKY ANGEL VOL. 7

Keiko continues her torment of hero-turned-heroine Megumi, but Megumi is more worried about losing her best friend Miki to true love and another boy. Hiroyuki Nishimori (Viz, \$9.99)

## CHRONO CODE VOL. 1

Three people cross time and space to meet and change their destinies, and one girl who cannot remember her past just might be the key to everything! Eui-Chul Shin and Il-ho Choi (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

## DEARS VOL. 3

Life with sexy alien Ren is crazy enough as it is for Takeya, and things can only get so much worse with the appearance of his little sister Natsuki. Peach-Pit (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

## DESCENDANTS OF DARKNESS VOL. 6

It's a business trip to Okinawa for Tsuzuki and Hisoka to help a fellow *shinigami* in need. But what in the world is Watari cooking up back home!? Yoko Matsushita (Viz, \$9.99)

## THE DEVIL DOES EXIST VOL. 2

Now that Takeru is officially Kayano's stepbrother, she must deal with the trials and tribulations of falling in love amidst a whole new family. Mitsuba Takanashi (CMX, \$9.99)

## DR. SLUMP VOL. 2

Arale the robot might look like an innocent little girl, but she is well on her way to becoming a superhero, vanquishing space aliens and bank robbers alike. Akira Toriyama (Viz, \$7.99)



BERSERK VOL. 8

## FROM EROICA WITH LOVE VOL. 4

In order to steal military secrets, NATO orders Klaus to team up with his arch-nemesis Eroica! Naturally, it's a battle of wills. Will they cooperate and win the day? Yasuko Aoike (CMX, \$9.99)

## FRUITS BASKET VOL. 10

Tohru is spending time with the Sohmas at their family's summer house, but it's no vacation when Akito shows up and causes much disconcertion... Natsuki Takaya (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

## FULL MOON O SAGASHITE VOL. 1

The young but sickly Mizuki dreams of becoming a pop star. Can two unexpected harbingers of death grant her fondest wish before her time is up? Arina Tanemura (Viz, \$8.99)

## FUSHIGI YUGI GENBU KAIJAN VOL. 1

Takiko Okuda attempts to destroy her father's translation of *The Universe of the Four Gods* but gets sucked into the book instead, becoming the Priestess of Genbu. Yu Watase (Viz, \$8.99)

## GENSHIKEN VOL. 2

Kanji falls in deeper with the Society for the Study of Modern Visual Culture crowd. Will he ever come out to the world as a true otaku? Kio Shimoku (Del Rey, \$10.95)

## GRAVITATION VOL. 12

Can Bad Luck beat out Nittle Grasper with their new song, or are they Japan's next one-hit wonder? Don't miss the conclusion to this rocking series! Maki Murakami (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

## HEAT GUY J

Daisuke Aurora and his android partner, Heat Guy J, keep the peace, but when they make enemies with a local mob boss, is it personal or just business? Chiaki Ogishima (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

## MUSTREAD

### Beck: Mongolian Chop Squad Vol. 1

Fourteen-year-old Yukio Tanaka is *boring*. He's cursed with minimal personality, no hobbies and no luck with girls. He wants out of this adolescent rut, but he doesn't know the way...until the offbeat Ryusuke Minami and his Frankenstein-like dog Beck wander into his life. Ryusuke initiates Yukio into the world of rock 'n roll, and the adventure of Yukio's lifetime begins!

Manga artist Harold Sakuishi (*Stopper Busujima*, *Gorilla Man*) is famous for his detailed artwork and hilarious, gripping dialogue. His most popular work to date is *Beck*, a bestselling manga series in Japan currently at 22 volumes that spawned a successful anime. If you fancy yourself a music expert, *Beck* will stretch your brain to its limit; just try and figure out all the hidden music references in this manga! Everything from Bob Marley to The Beatles are referenced in these pages. Fortunately, you needn't wait much longer to rock out, because TOKYOPOP is bringing this addictive tale to our shores, with the first volume available for \$9.99 on July 12! ■ CB





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# WIZARD WORLD

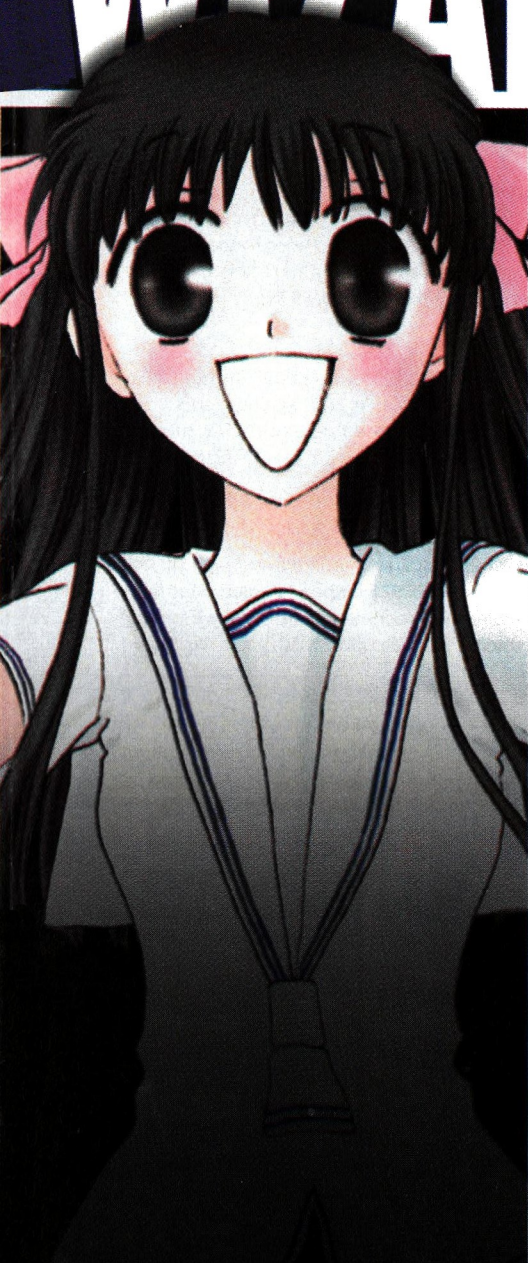


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## READ ON ARRIVAL

Manga to learn Japanese for



**+Anima** An "Anima" is a fusion of man and beast; out-cast by society and shamed into exile, four Anima set out on a quest to find other Anima in this epic by Mukai Natsumi. **+Anima** is serialized in *Monthly Comic Dengeki Daioh*.

### Bremen

Kasuga and Reiji have it in their heads that if they travel to Tokyo, they'll become gods of rock! Unfortunately, they attract more danger and failure than groupies. From Umezawa Haruto, the creator of *Harelyua II Boy*.



**Real** From the king of basketball manga Takehiko Inoue (the man behind the legendary *Slam Dunk*) *Real* is serialized in *Young Jump* and follows the obscure but fascinating world of wheelchair basketball. ■ ZB

## FIGURED IN

### 'Sgt. Frog' Powered Natsumi

From the pages of Mine Yoshizaki's alien-invasion comedy manga *Sgt. Frog* (available from TOKYOPOP) comes this highly detailed and hilarious Natsumi toy. In one mode, she's in her school swimsuit, and in another, she's a fully-transformed Gundam-esque super student! Given all the *Gundam* parodies in *Sgt. Frog*, this toy was a no-brainer, and was included with the special edition of volume 10. ■ ZB



### HUNTER X HUNTER VOL. 3

The heroes battle with desperate criminals and escape Trick Tower with only moments to spare. Then, it's off to a deserted island where the aspiring hunters must hunt each other! Yoshihiro Togashi (Viz, \$7.99)

### I'S VOL. 2

Now that childhood sweetheart Itsuki has returned, Ichitaka finds himself caught between her and his infatuation with beautiful classmate Iori. Masakazu Katsura (Viz, \$7.99)

### MADARA VOL. 4

Madara has given up on being a hero and instead chooses a life of peace in the village. However, when enemies descend once more, he must choose between his destiny and death! Eiiji Otsuka and Sho-u Tajima (CMX, \$9.99)

### NODAME CANTABILE VOL. 2

Shinichi involves himself further in the strange life of his neighbor Nodame. Will they ever make music together, or will Shinichi go nuts first? Tomoko Ninomiya (Del Rey, \$10.95)

### ONE PIECE VOL. 7

Don Krieg and his pirate goons attempt to hijack the floating restaurant Baratie. The battle isn't exactly going well for the sea cooks...that is, until Sanji steps up to the plate! Eiichiro Oda (Viz, \$7.95)

### OURAN HIGH SCHOOL HOST CLUB VOL. 1

Poor girl Haruhi accidentally breaks an expensive vase belonging to the mysterious, exclusive Ouran High School Host Club and now must work for six super-rich boys to pay them back. Bisco Hatori (Viz, \$8.99)

### PRINCESS AI VOL. 2

Ai is the next rising star of the music industry, but when the media airs a scandal to promote her new album, will her budding relationship with Kent survive? Courtney Love, DJ Milky and Misaho Kujiradou (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

### PRINCE OF TENNIS VOL. 8

The match against St. Rudolph's isn't looking good for Seishun Academy. Will Ryoma be able to turn the tide when his opponent mops up the court with left-handed players? Takeshi Konomi (Viz, \$7.95)

### RURONI KENSHIN VOL. 16

Kenshin faces off with Seta Sôjirô, the smiling but deceptively powerful swordsman, in the next phase of a series of battles that will ultimately lead to Shishio Makoto! Nobuhiro Watsuki (Viz, \$7.95)

### SAIKANO VOL. 5

Embroided in the harsh realities of warfare, Chise struggles to preserve her humanity as she becomes an ultimate weapon, and Japan's last hope. Shin Takahashi (Viz, \$9.99)

### SAKURA TAISEN VOL. 1

Tokyo, 1921: Girls in uniform battle steam-powered robots. Ensign Ogami, ostensibly assigned to a benign post in the Imperial Theater, soon finds himself in the middle of it all. Hiroi Oujii and Itsuku Masa (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

### SAMURAI DEEPER KYO VOL. 14

Kyo and Muramasa must part at last, and the gang is about to take to the road again when Akira shows up with something Kyo wants very much... Kamiyjo Akimine (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

### SAMURAI MAN VOL. 1

High school student Ryouma must find time for both his studies and epic battles as the Warrior King of the Southern Skies. Naoki Serizawa (Media Blasters, \$9.99)

### SGT. FROG VOL. 9

It's the Keroro Platoon versus Children's Day decorations, relaxing hot springs, and monster monsoons! Are these hostilities more than they can handle? Mine Yoshizaki (TOKYOPOP, \$9.99)

### TOKYO BOYS & GIRLS VOL. 1

Mimori Kosaka has made it to the high school of her choice, but when she is elected class representative, life becomes far from easy. From the creator of *Hot Gimmick*. Miki Aihara (Viz, \$9.99)

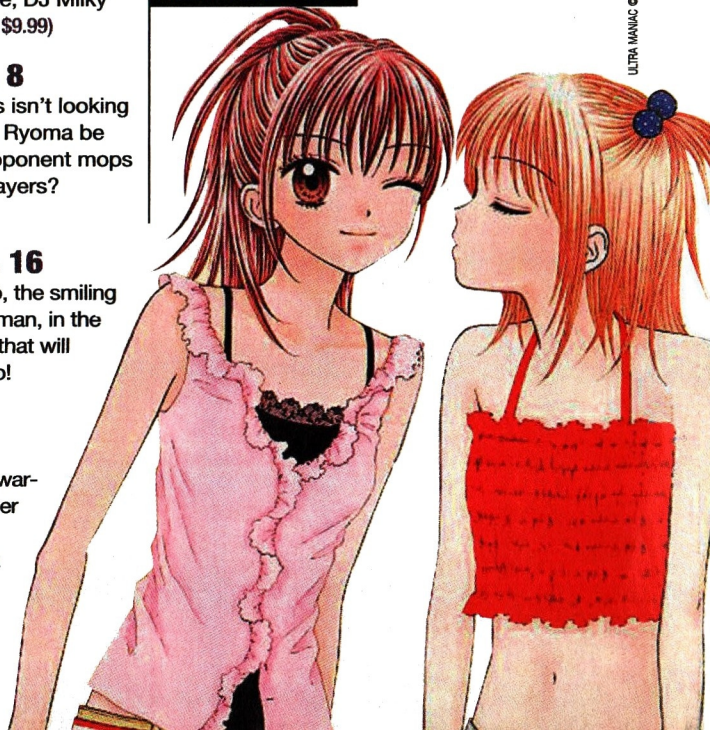
### TOUGH VOL. 3

Kiibo decides to take on the "Evil Beast" who defeated his new friend Onihei, but the beast isn't interested in Kiibo—he'd rather fight Kiibo's father! Tetsuya Saruwatari (Viz, \$9.99)

### ULTRA MANIAC VOL. 1

The shy Ayu Tateishi has made a new friend at school, but there's one small problem; her new friend Nina Sakura is a witch whose spells never work! From the creator of *Marmalade Boy*. Wataru Yoshizumi (Viz, \$8.99)

### ULTRA MANIAC VOL. 1





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# PROMISE KEEPER

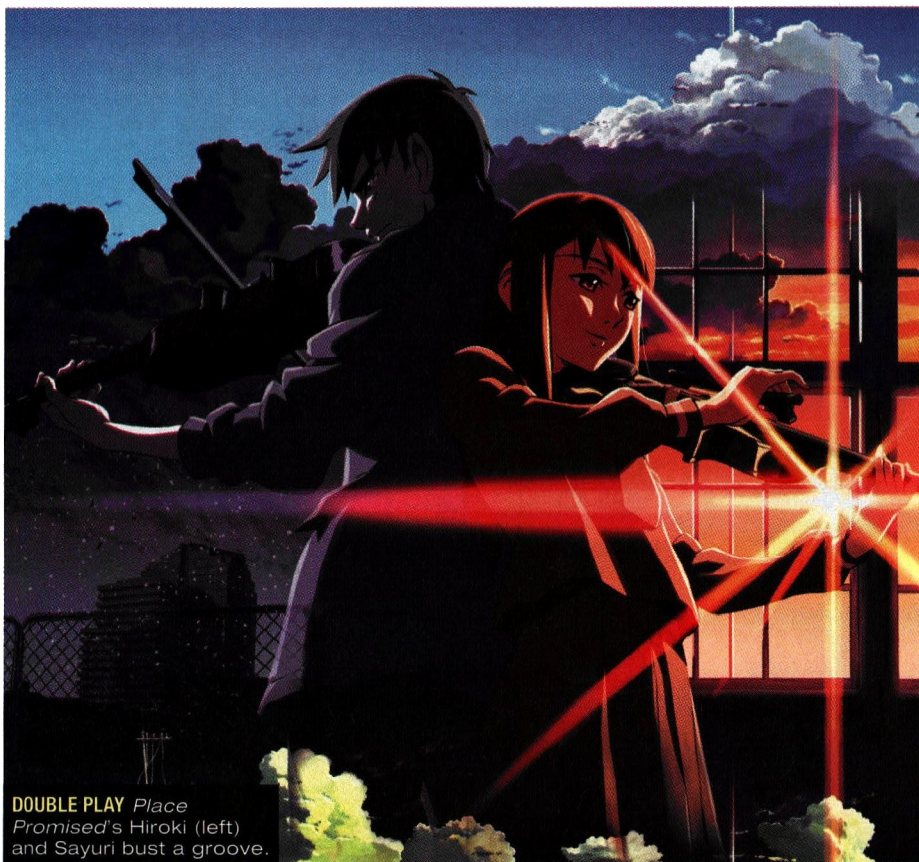
Makoto Shinkai's second self-made masterpiece set for theaters, DVD

**M**akoto Shinkai has problems delegating responsibility. While most theatrical movies have a crew of hundreds, Shinkai is the writer, director, editor and sound designer on his latest film, *The Place Promised in our Early Days*.

The animation upstart Shinkai is legendary for creating the fan-favorite 30-minute OVA *Voices of a Distant Star* (as well as the beloved short *She and her Cat*) entirely on his Mac home computer. However, when planning *The Place Promised* as his first feature-length, theatrical work he still tried to do it himself (see sidebar). The results were just as astonishing to anime fans as *Distant Star* had been; *The Place Promised in our Early Days* had following a massively successful Japanese theatrical run in which the film was held over for a solid month after its initial final show due to overwhelming fan demand. It went on to receive numerous Japanese film awards and accolades, with some calling it the best animated film of the year (beating out even Hayao Miyazaki's *Howl's Moving Castle*).

"*The Place Promised in our Early Days* is a film into which I poured my own feelings," says Shinkai, "about the experience of being raised in the Japanese countryside versus living in the cityscape of Tokyo, which is where I am currently."

The story is set in an alternate-history version of Earth where World War II ended in a stalemate, resulting in Japan being divided between the U.S. and the Japanese government. Three young friends make a promise to one another that they'll discover the meaning behind a mysterious tower that stands on the island of Hokkaido; but as time passes, tragedy befalls the trio, and one of them slips into a coma. As it happens, the mysterious Hokkaido tower is directly connected to the strange



DOUBLE PLAY *Place Promised's* Hiroki (left) and Sayuri bust a groove.

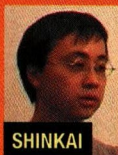
coma their friend is in; if they want to save her life, they're gonna have a find a way to get into that tower and right what's wrong. The tone, story and art (which are dreamily nostalgic and yet fantastical) are all pure Shinkai, whom some are calling "the new Miyazaki."

ADV Films managed to sneak *The Place Promised* into a few theaters this past May and June in the U.S. If you missed it, there's no

need to worry because a DVD version of the film will be released by ADV in July. Meanwhile, Shinkai is already back on his computer, planning his next work. "I'm planning to do a few short films set in modern Japan," said the director. "I think I'd rather do a few slice-of-life stories rather than sci-fi or fantasy. After working on those, I'd like to do another full-length theatrical film at some point." ■ **Zac Bertschy**

## HOMEMOVIES

How Makoto Shinkai made a whole film in his home



SHINKAI

Most directors need a huge staff and millions of dollars to make a lavish animated feature, but all Makoto

Shinkai needs is his computer and a few buddies.

"For *The Place Promised*, I used mainly a PowerMac G5," said Shinkai. "I had a principal staff of

four people (myself, Ushio Tazawa, the chief animation director, Takumi Tanji on art, and Tenmon handling the music). I handled the direction, script, storyboards, coloring, art, photography and so on." Although he had a bigger staff than he did on his solo project, *Voices of a Distant Star*, Shinkai is still one of the hardest working animators around.

"I think the production style of *The Place Promised* is unique in that, rather than us forming a studio, each of the staff members performed their duties from their own homes," Shinkai added. "They would upload their work to a server, and then I would download everything from home on my G5." And you thought your fan art was impressive! ■ **ZB**



SAYURI



# DOUBLE DOWN

## 'Tsubasa' movie joins 'XXXHOLiC' flick

**C**LAMP fanatics, shojo addicts and dimension-hopping adventure enthusiasts, hold onto your manga! This August, Production I.G (*Ghost in the Shell: Innocence*) unleashes two films featuring the interconnected stories of bestselling fan-favorites *Tsubasa* and *XXXHOLiC*. The movies are based on the ongoing manga titles by the artistic team of CLAMP, both available in the United States from Del Rey.

*Tsubasa* imagines characters from all of CLAMP's many manga in an all-new universe. Syaoran Li (from *Cardcaptor Sakura*) is guided by the hand of fate on a quest that spans a hundred alternate realities, all to restore his beloved Sakura's memories. *XXXHOLiC* is the tale of a boy who sees ominous spirits, and makes a deal with a mysterious witch named Yuuko in order to rid himself of the curse. Yuuko turns out to be a "dimensional witch"...who winds up taking part in Syaoran's *Tsubasa* tale! Playing out like a remixed version of CLAMP's greatest hits, both titles include references to the studio's voluminous bibliography, and are still being published in Japan.

The films will be played in Japanese theaters as a double-feature this August. Happily for Japanese CLAMP fans, they can bide their time by watching the 26 episode *Tsubasa* TV anime series from Bee Train, currently airing on NHK. Although no licenser for the movies have been announced, with the popularity of CLAMP and Production I.G behind them, it's a good bet you won't need to jump to an alternate reality to see these films in the U.S. ■ Dan LaGrone

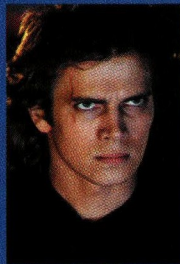


**BOY STORY** *Tsubasa*'s Syaoran (bottom center) prepares for a trip to the multiplex.

## CASTINGCALL

### Inuyasha

*Inuyasha*, Rumiko Takahashi's fantastically fabulous feudal fairy tale about a girl named Kagome and her perilous adventures with a grumpy dog demon named Inuyasha, has been burning up the TV, DVD and manga charts for years now. Given how incredibly popular Viz's *Inuyasha* is, it's not too big a stretch to hypothesize about who would star in a live-action version!



#### HAYDEN CHRISTENSEN as INUYASHA

He just wrapped up a long stint as Darth Vader's sneering adolescent visage in the *Star Wars* prequels and he's an expert at playing angst, mostly-evil types who fall in love, so

who better to fill Inuyasha's puffy red pants than Hayden Christensen?



#### MANDY MOORE as KAGOME

With her expertise at playing conflicted teens (as seen in *Saved!* and *Chasing Liberty*) and an eternally young-looking mug, Mandy Moore would be perfect for the role of Kagome, the reluctantly-

in-love girl who travels through time.



#### RYAN REYNOLDS as MIROKU

Ryan Reynolds has built his entire career around playing smirky, snarky, wisecracking ladies' men in movies like *Blade Trinity* and *Van Wilder*, so he'd fill the role of the lecherous monk and fearsome warrior Miroku to a tee.



#### KIRSTEN DUNST as SANGO

Okay, so she doesn't have a history of playing warrior women, but we think Kirsten Dunst (best known as Spider-man's love interest, Mary Jane) has the figure and the spunk needed to get Sango's

legendary boomerang off the ground.



#### STUART TOWNSEND as SESSHOMARU

Famous for roles as pretty-boy villains like the vampire Lestat in *Queen of the Damned* and Dorian Gray in *LXG*, Townshend is ideal for Inuyasha's dream-boat older brother who also happens to enjoy slaying

humans and wreaking havoc. ■ ZB



# PUFFY STICKLERS

As 'Hi Hi' hits Japanese TV, Puffy AmiYumi tours America again

**S**ometimes there just aren't enough hours in the day. But Puffy AmiYumi, Japan's most energetic duo, still find time to record a hit show for Cartoon Network—which is now airing in Japan—release a new album, and go on a nationwide tour!

Fresh off their recent West Coast tour and primed to launch into their East Coast dates this August, (check [www.puffyamiyumi.com](http://www.puffyamiyumi.com) for places and dates) but Ami and Yumi took a breather to talk to *Anime Insider* about *Hi Hi*, hopping around America, and (un)healthy foods.

**How have you both been?**

**Ami & Yumi:** We've been doing great!

**How has making *Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi* been?**

**Ami:** The live-action parts have been shot in Tokyo and it's been a lot of fun!

**Yumi:** Cartoon Network always respects our opinions and has incorporated many them into the show so we feel like we're part of the creating process.

**What do you think your Japanese fans will think of *Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi*?**

**Ami:** It's a big surprise that the show will air in Japan. I thought it would broadcast only in America.

**Yumi:** I hope Japanese kids will like the show as much as American kids!

**What's the funniest episode of *Hi Hi* you've seen?**

**Ami:** The one in which I go crazy collecting prizes in cereal boxes.

**Yumi:** The episode in which Ami works at a circus to buy me a birthday gift.

**Do you have a real Puffy tour bus?**

**Ami:** No, we don't. It would be cool if we did!

**Yumi, is Ami as nice as she's portrayed in *Hi Hi*?**

**Yumi:** Yes, she is! And we're a bit more complicated than the cartoon characters. [Laughs]

**Ami, is Yumi as dark as she's portrayed in *Hi Hi*?**

**Ami:** Not really. It's a cartoon so they took our real personalities and emphasized them. I



like the cartoon Yumi, though. She's pretty cool!

**Are you excited about your upcoming American tours?**

**Ami & Yumi:** Yes, both of us and our band are very excited about the tour! You've done several tours in America already. What's your favorite place to visit in America?

**Ami:** We go to L.A., New York and San Francisco a lot. The more I go to those places and get to know more about them, the more I like them.

**Yumi:** L.A. is my favorite place.

**What's your favorite food to eat in America?**

**Ami:** TACO BELL!

**Yumi:** Chili dogs from Carnies.

**Yumi, how is your English doing?**

**Yumi:** I stayed in L.A. for a few months to study English about two years ago but I don't have many chances to use my English back in Tokyo so I've forgotten most of what I learned! Every time I go to the U.S., many people come talk to me so I hope to be able to talk with them without an interpreter.

**Do you ever get sick of singing the *Teen Titans* theme song?**

**Ami:** No! I always enjoy singing the song.

**Yumi:** Not at all!

**When can your American fans look forward to your next album?**

**Yumi:** We're recording a new album in Japan now. We're trying to bring it to our American fans as soon as possible. Please look forward to it! ■ Robert Bricken & Summer Mullins



YUMI (L) AND AMI

## BACKSTAGEPASS

Spotlight on **X-JAPAN**

Like the U.S.'s Nirvana or the U.K.'s Sex Pistols, Japan has its own tragic and iconic punk band. X-Japan was one of the earliest and most popular of the flashy "visual kei" (stylishly shocking) groups in Japanese rock. High school friends Yoshiki Hayashi and Toshimitsu Deyama formed the band in the mid-80s. They were soon joined by Taiji, Pata and Hide.

In 1988 X-Japan released its first album, *Vanishing Vision*, a blend of high-powered, theatrical heavy metal and rock. Though released on an independent label funded by Yoshiki's mom, its

success brought the group to Sony's attention. Four albums followed; 1997's *Dahlia* was the group's final release. Here in the U.S., Tofu Records has released *BEST*, a special X-Japan DVD of live performances. You may also remember X-Japan's "Forever Love," the theme song to *X: The Movie*.

On May 2, 1998, Hide committed suicide—though Yoshiki and fans maintain that it was likely an accidental death. The remaining band members have moved on to solo projects.

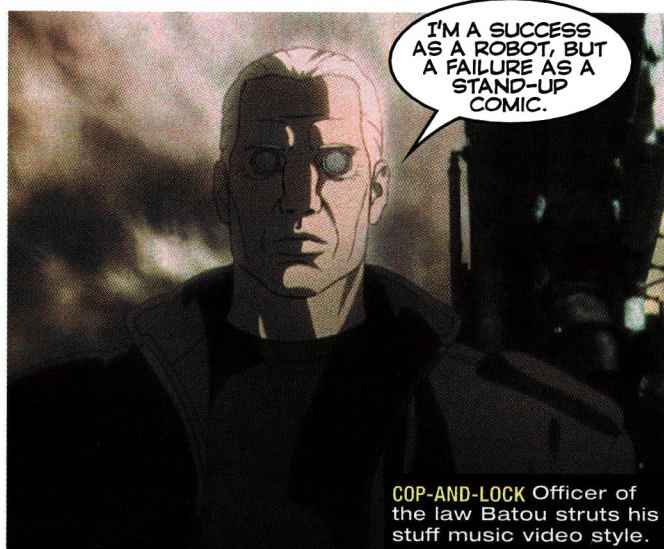
■ Christian Nutt





# RETURN TO INNOCENCE

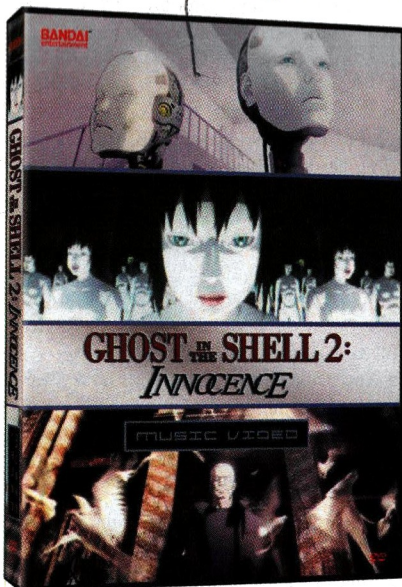
Bandai remixes Oshii's 'GITS2' with official music video DVD



**COP-AND-LOCK** Officer of the law Batou struts his stuff music video style.

**G**host in the Shell 2: Innocence was a real head-scratcher of a film, but it's no mystery that the music was incredible.

Bandai Entertainment knows it, too. This summer, it's releasing a new DVD that fuses the music and visuals of Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* (available now on DVD from Dreamworks) to create a potent anthology of music videos.



"With its recent nomination for Best Score in an Animated Feature Film by the ASIFA Annie Awards, it'd be a crime not to make the music available," said Jerry Chu, marketing manager for Bandai. "Plus, it's fun to pop in the DVD player at a party."

Production I.G., which supplied the animation for Oshii's film, created these music videos as a sort of high-tech remix of the movie. It's an eye-popping marriage of music and art, and now you can enjoy the beauty of *Innocence* without all that pesky dialogue in the way.

The disc will be available in two versions; a standard edition that contains simply the videos and two bonus tracks for \$24.98, and a metal-cased limited edition that comes with a CD of the *Innocence* soundtrack, which will run \$34.98.

The CD includes an interview with the film's composer, Kenji Kawai, who also scored the legendary first film, *Ghost in the Shell*, and is famous for his excesses of effort (who else would record the sound of a specially built music box in a frozen cave?). Even the DVD is tricked out: enhanced for 16x9 televisions, with a multi-channel surround sound track for the ultimate immersion in *Innocence*. Look for both versions in stores everywhere July 12. ■ *Zac Bertschy*

## FACETHEMUSIC

JULY's best J-pop and anime soundtracks

HOT PICK

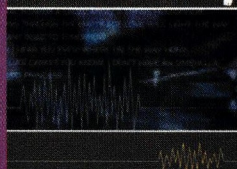


### FAFNER: NO WHERE

Giant robots and dramatic symphony music go together like peanut butter and jelly. The sweeping score for this particular soundtrack is provided by none other than the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, which was also tapped by Yoko Kanno to provide the score for *Escaflowne*. The opening and closing songs (both by

angela) on this CD are a U.S. release exclusive, as the Japanese version of the disc did not include them! (Geneon Anime Music, \$14.98)

### ANIME KARAOKE COLLECTION



### ANIME KARAOKE COLLECTION 1

Anime karaoke's not just for conventions anymore! With the help of the lyrics booklet, belt out covers of your favorite anime themes. Included are two new tracks from J-pop artist Kotoko (*Please Twins*, *Tweeny Witches*) and Stephanie, winner of last year's AX Idol contest.

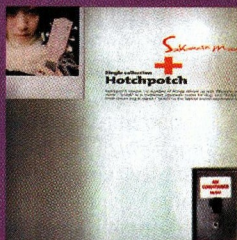
(Geneon Anime Music, \$14.98)



### AZUMANGA DAIOH VOCAL COLLECTION

If you've seen even one episode of high school comedy *Azumanga Daioh*, then you'll know what to expect. The 12 vocal tracks!—include full-length versions of the opening and closing songs that were not available on the previous soundtrack.

(Geneon Anime Music, \$14.98)



### BEST (MAAYA SAKAMOTO)

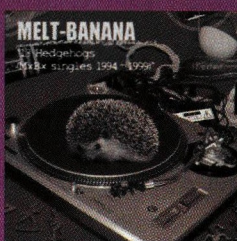
Maaya Sakamoto is the voice behind some of anime's most popular characters and theme songs! This "best of" CD includes her songs from *Escaflowne*, *Cardcaptor Sakura* and more, as well as some of her solo hits. The accompanying booklet includes commentary on each song by Maaya herself! (Geneon Anime Music, \$14.98)



### MADLAX OST 1

Liked the soundtrack to *.hack//SIGN*? Adored the music to *Noir*? Thought the music in the *Xenosaga II* PS2 game sounded familiar? Then you'll continue to love Yuki Kajiura's work, this time in the first *Madlax* OST.

(Geneon Anime Music, \$14.98)



### 13 HEDGEHOGS (MELT-BANANA)

These indie grindcore artists from Japan have been a staple on underground music scenes across the States since the mid-90s, but if you've missed them, this singles collection is the perfect opportunity to catch up on their unique style. (A-zap, \$12) ■ *SM*



## GAME PLANS

Anime games rule E3; 'One Piece,' 'Zatch Bell' and 'DBZ' lead the charge



For many, this year's biggest story at E3 was the next generation of consoles—but for anime fans, E3 was all about the here and now! From *Final Fantasy* powerhouse Square Enix to Bandai to Konami, an avalanche of anime-related videogames hit E3 this year like an asteroid, and gamers will be feeling the impact throughout 2005!

Headlining the Bandai booth was the much-anticipated *One Piece: Grand Battle*, which is much more than a simple port of the popular pirate action series. While losing the frenetic four-player modes of the original Japanese games, *One Piece* has added a greater level of interactivity with the environment, making for insanely fun melees. With 16 characters, 32 support characters, and seven different environments to explore and destroy, *One Piece* will more than satisfy fans of the series. *One Piece: Grand Battle* will be released in September for the PS2 and GameCube.

Not to be outdone, the latest (and potentially greatest) game in the *Dragon Ball Z: Budokai* series was also announced by Atari. Titled *Budokai Tenkaichi*, the game sports a whopping 60 DBZ characters and includes a handful of brand-new features including destructible environments and character models that actually get bruised and battered during the fight! Look for it to hit the shelves later this fall.

Also at the Bandai booth, *Zatch Bell!* is a fighting game based heavily around its

magic system, as the pint-sized mamodo and their human partners duke it out in a traditional 3D fighting game. Controlling two characters at once makes for hectic brawls, as the humans unleashed the awesome spells of the mamodo while fending off attacks. *Zatch Bell!* will come this fall to the PS2.

*Inuyasha* fans won't feel left out, as *Inuyasha: Feudal Combat* is scheduled for an August release on the PS2. Much like *Zatch Bell!*, the game has teams of characters fighting each other in 3D environments, but in *Inuyasha*, players will be able to pick and choose the members of their teams, which can affect how well their two characters work together. The teamwork aspect of the game adds spice to combat, as you can force the other team to work together so poorly, fights become two on one.

Meanwhile, at Konami's mammoth booth, the latest installment in the popular *Shaman King* line was unveiled. In *Shaman King: Master of Spirits 2*, you control Yoh Asakura and guide him through a perilous action-RPG sequel to the original Gameboy Advance game released last fall. Capture the spirits of your enemies and master their power to destroy the Guardian of Demons! Look for *Shaman King* to haunt store shelves this August.

And that's not all; a metric ton of *Gundam* games are also coming down the pike (including an all-new, hyperpowered PS3 *Gundam* game called *Gundam World*) as well as a *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* game for Sony's new PSP handheld! All in all, while E3 stood in the shadow of three brand-new consoles (see story next page), anime fans made out like bandits. ■ Dominic Nguyen



**DOG DAYS** Inuyasha (above), Kagome and the whole cast of the show duke it out for total supremacy.



**DRAGON PUNCH** *Budokai Tenkaichi* will bruise your PS2 later this year.



**GRAND OL' TIME** It's Zolo versus Buggy (or 14 others) in *One Piece: Grand Battle*.



**BELL RINGER** Zatch and Kiyo lay the zap-down on PS2 and GameCube.



# THE NEXT LEVEL

Sony, Microsoft, Nintendo unveil a new generation of fun

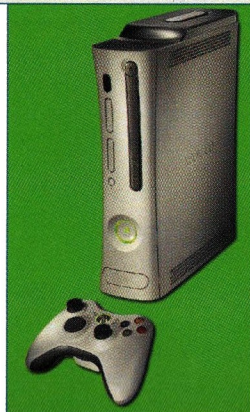
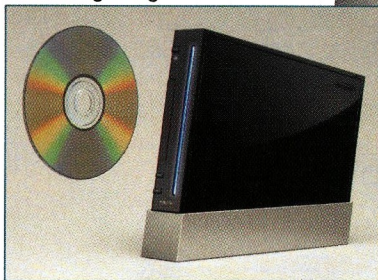
Wrap up those controllers, dig a shallow grave and say a prayer for your old consoles; at this year's E3, Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo unleashed onto a salivating crowd the details behind the next generation of gaming!

The Xbox 360 will be the first on the scene, coming out this holiday season. It's only half as powerful as the PS3, with a single teraflop (floating point operations per second), but the 360 is more than just a game machine. The Xbox 360 will also function as a media center, with music, video and DVD support, in addition to a TiVo-like TV recording functionality. Microsoft hopes that it will dominate your living room!

Sony's PS3 is based on raw power. With 2 teraflops to work with and support for HDTV, the PS3 will push the limits of how good a game can look. But Sony also plans on emphasizing the machine's multi-player aspect. It supports up to 7 players, and has built-in Ethernet to connect to online gamers.

Nintendo is relying on its fan base to sell its system. What makes the Revolution unique is that the past 20 years of Nintendo games will be playable on the system, along with the standard online bells and whistles. The PS3 and Revolution will come your way in mid-2006.

With the next generation not only offering power and beauty, but a wide variety of experiences, the future looks bright for gamers—and photo-realistic. ■ DN

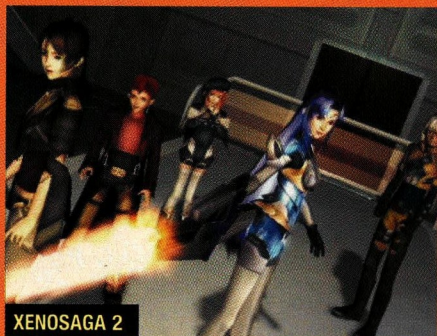


MY CONTROLLER ALSO DOUBLES AS A BATARANG!

**REVOLUTIONARY** Meet the next three biggest threats to your bank account; the PS3 (above), the Revolution (upper left) and the Xbox360.

## CONTINUE?

Other gaming news and previews



XENOSAGA 2

• **DER WILLE ZUR MERGER** On September 29, *Xenosaga* publishers Namco and anime giant Bandai will form Namco Bandai Holdings, marrying Namco's video game savvy to Bandai's animation franchises and marketing. Namco Bandai will be the second-largest company in the Japanese game and toy business, behind Sega Sammy.

- **CONDUCTING CLASSICS** Hot on the heels of the successful *Final Fantasy* concert series, Tommy Tallarico and Jack Wall have created the "Video Games Live" tour. The show will consist of orchestral renditions of music from classic video games like *Donkey Kong* and *Castlevania*, as well as more modern selections.
- **DREAMSCAPE** Capcom has unveiled the fourth installment in its *Onimusha* series, entitled *Shin Onimusha: Dawn of Dreams*. Similar to *Onimusha 3*, *Dawn of Dreams* features a dual-fighter system, with two characters under the player's control at the same time. The game does not yet have a release date, but will be released on the PS2 later this year.
- **PRINCESS MAKER** Nintendo announced at E3 that its latest *Legend of Zelda* game will feature the cryptic subtitle *Twilight Princess*. A slew of Link's new moves were shown off at the conference, including an

eye-opening new scene in which Link appears to transform into a werewolf!

- **CASTLE KEEP** Also at E3, Konami announced that the latest game in the series, *Castlevania: Curse of Darkness* would be heading not only to the PS2 (the franchise's home console), but would also be seen on the Xbox. The game follows the demon-taming exploits of Hector, who's on a mission of revenge for his slain wife. ■ DN



ONIMUSHA 3



# videogamereleases JULY

## ARMORED CORE: FORMULA FRONT

*Armored Core* isn't just going mobile—it's overhauling the system. The *Armored Core* series has always been about mech customization, and in *Formula Front*, those pesky piloting parts of the gameplay have been removed, instead letting you customize the mech's AI as well. Tinker to your heart's content, and leave the driving to the pros! (Agetec, PSP, \$39.99)

## CODED ARMS

One of the first FPS games available for the PSP, *Coded Arms* pits the player against a rogue virtual reality program that serves as a playground for intrepid hackers. With four-player wireless death matches, *Coded Arms* offers infinite replayability for FPS aficionados. (Konami, PSP, \$39.99)

## COLISEUM: ROAD TO FREEDOM

Koei takes a break from making action-RPGs set in ancient China to...make an action-RPG set in ancient Rome. Sold into slavery, players will be forced to buy their freedom in the pits of the Coliseum, fighting other gladiators and learning special moves along the way. (Koei, PS2, \$49.99)

## DARKWATCH

Sammy spices up the Old West with some good old vampire-hunting action. As Jericho Cross, former outlaw and agent of Darkwatch, players use six-shooters and supernatural powers to defeat the forces of the undead. (Sammy, Xbox/PS2, \$49.99)



## DEATH JR.

It's a tough life being the Grim Reaper's son—especially after accidentally unleashing an ancient pirate's curse during a class field trip. Armed with his father's scythe and an unholy selection of firearms, Death Jr. must plow his way through hordes of ghosts and demons, and rescue his classmates. One of the flagship titles for the PSP, look for a slew of *Death Jr.* merchandise this summer! (Konami, PSP, \$39.99)

## DRAGON BALL GT: TRANSFORMATION

From the developer of *Legacy of Goku* and *Buu's Fury*, *Transformation* brings the same action-adventure formula to *Dragon Ball GT*. Playing as Goku, Trunks and Pan, relive the exciting events of the GT story and journey to collect the Dragon Balls! (Atari, GBA, \$29.99)

## DYNASTY WARRIORS

After a successful foray on the PSP, Koei brings its action game of epic battles and personal duels to the Nintendo DS. Take control of a general from the Wu, Shu, or Wei Kingdom, lead your troops into battle, and become a true hero of the Three Kingdoms! (Koei, Nintendo DS, \$39.99)

## FLIPNIC PINBALL

*Flipnic* offers old-school pinball gameplay with lush graphics for each of its multi-leveled tables. Complete missions to unlock new levels and mini-games, from saving flamingos from hungry crocodiles on the Biology stage, to keeping the ball out of the hands of angry robots in the Metallurgy stage. (Ubisoft, PS2, \$19.99)

## HARVEST MOON: ANOTHER WONDERFUL LIFE

Natsume's quirky farm simulation is aimed at a female audience this time around, offering a female main character. Much like *A Wonderful Life*, players take the reins of the family farm, and are expected to find a good husband, keep the farm lively, and in the end, live a truly wonderful life. (Natsume, GameCube, \$29.99)

## MUSTPLAY

### Fullmetal Alchemist 2: Curse of the Crimson Elixir



Square Enix is giving fans of *Fullmetal Alchemist* the game they've been looking for—an action-RPG that lets them replay the events of the TV series, with a fully-voiced new story, and a half hour of new animation. Players take control of Edward Elric and his brother Alphonse just after the events of the first game. Using an improved version of the first game's battle system—as well as new cel-shaded graphics to match the show—Ed and Al continue their quest for redemption as they unravel the tragic tale of the man once known as the Silver Bullet Alchemist. Familiar characters appear frequently to help or hinder the brothers, from Roy Mustang to Scar, which keeps the fights from becoming repetitive. *Curse of the Crimson Elixir* comes out in July for the PS2, with a suggested price of \$39.99. ■ DN



EDWARD



# Everyone wants to take him out... Even Kurama and Hiei



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## IMPORTREPORT

Japan's gaming goodness



FUTAKOI

あ〜ん、四葉にも  
チエキさせてクダ  
サイ〜!!

兄チャマ!  
今日は四葉がチエキ  
するからねっ!

### FUTAKOI

Created by Mediaworks, the same twisted minds that spawned *Sister Princess* and its 12 datable sisters, *FutaKoi* delves further and more ridiculously into the extremes of dating games. This time, the theme is twins (*FutaKoi* means "Twin Love"). Through the Twin View and Love Junction systems, an intrepid player can win the hearts of six cute pairs of twins...and seriously creep out his friends and family. (PS2)

### KENKA BANCHOU

From the maker of *Way of the Samurai* comes what might as well be named *Way of the Punk*. Take control of Yasuo Tanaka as he trains to be a consummate delinquent and defends his turf. Squat, glare menacingly at passersby, and become a true man by trading insults and punches. (PS2)

### SAINT SEIYA: CHAPTER—SANCTUARY

Bandai kicks it old-school with a fighting game based on *Knights of the Zodiac*. A robust story mode places players in the battle between the Bronze and Gold Knights, with all-new 3D animation. But the real treat for *Saint Seiya* fans is the collection of unlockable extras, ranging from character profiles to a history of toys. (PS2) ■ DN



SAINT SEIYA

## HARVEST MOON: MORE FRIENDS OF MINERAL TOWN

If living a wonderful life isn't enough, players can find more rural bliss on the GBA. This time, girls will be able to experience life in Mineral Town, partaking of the seasonal festivals and making friends with the townsfolk. Sow crops, raise livestock, and connect to the GameCube version to unlock a host of bonuses!

(Natsume, GBA, \$29.99)

## MAKAI KINGDOM: CHRONICLES OF THE SACRED TOME

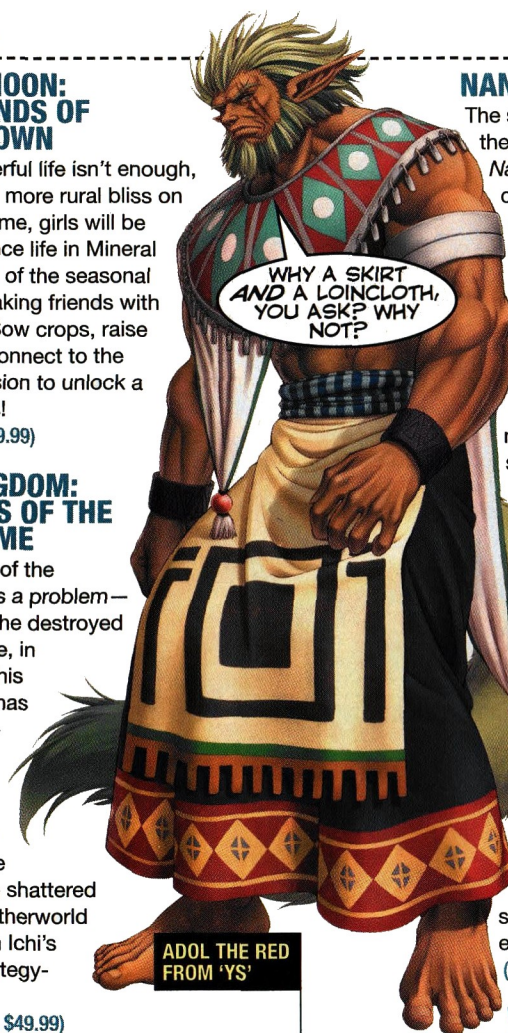
Lord Zetta, lord of the netherworld, has a problem—in a fit of anger, he destroyed the Sacred Tome, in turn destroying his realm. Now, he has to rebuild everything from scratch, from his minions to the buildings he needs, before he can conquer the shattered pieces of the netherworld through Nippon Ichi's trademark strategy-RPG system.

(Nippon Ichi, PS2, \$49.99)

## MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM SEED

*Gundam Seed*'s first foray onto a portable system lets players experience the war between Coordinators and Naturals from the cockpit of a Gundam. Use the touch pad to select your next target, fire up your Phase Shift Armor, and unleash the full fury of your Gundam on the enemy!

(Bandai, Nintendo DS, \$39.99)



ADOL THE RED FROM 'YS'

## NANOSTRAY

The spiritual heir to *Iridion*, the first shooter on the GBA, *Nanostray* seeks to replicate its predecessor's groundbreaking success. Network multiplayer and innovative use of the touch screen to select weapons and target enemies make *Nanostray* more than just a good 2D shooter—it makes it a must-buy for shooting fans.

(Majesco, Nintendo DS, \$29.99)

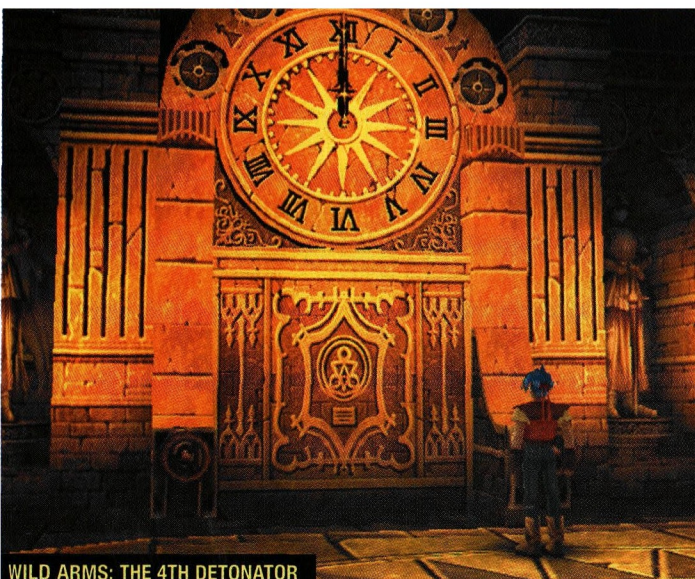
## RPG MAKER 3

Unsatisfied with recent RPGs? Think you could do a better job? If so, *RPG Maker 3* is for you. Create and write your very own 3D RPG, using a huge selection of tools from a map editor to thousands of characters, effects and sounds.

(Tommo, PS2, \$49.99)

## WILD ARMS: THE 4TH DETONATOR

The fourth *Wild Arms* breaks from tradition by becoming much more action-oriented than the previous games, incorporating puzzles and platforms into its repertoire. Combat has changed, too, and now uses a strategic "cell" system that makes character positions important in fights. But rest assured—the core RPG elements and always-excellent soundtrack are still intact. (Sony, PS2, \$49.99)



WILD ARMS: THE 4TH DETONATOR

## YS: THE ARC OF NAPISHTIM

The latest adventure of Adol the Red takes him to the center of the great Vortex of Canaan, where dark forces seek to resurrect the ancient technology of Napishtim. Hack, slash and jump through a series of fiendish dungeons, engage in furious battles with giant bosses, and save the world—all in a day's work.

(Konami, PSP, \$39.99) 21



WIZARD

# anime

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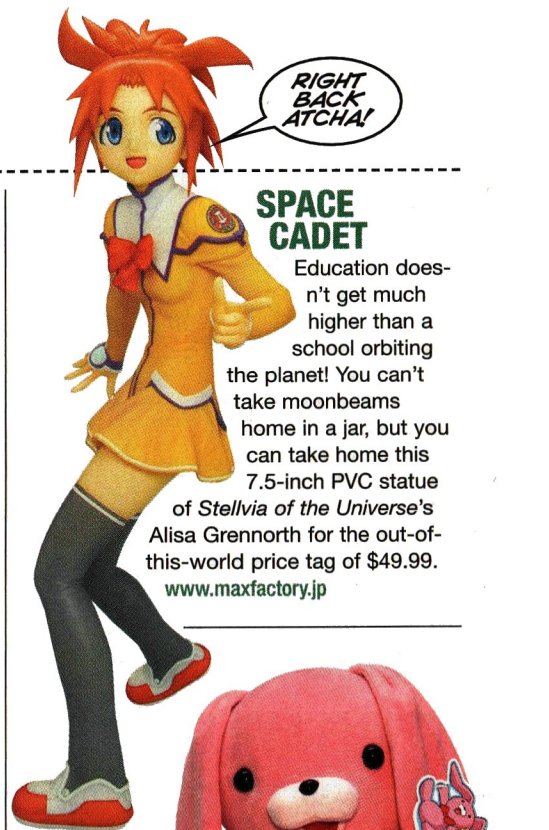


## CALL FOR BACK-UPS

Inuyasha and Kagome might hog the attention, but Toynami spreads the love to *Inuyasha*'s other non-couple with these long-awaited Sango and Miroku action figures for \$11.99 each. Demon hunter Sango comes with her absurdly large boomerang, while monk Miroku has his cursed wind-tunnel. [www.toynami.com](http://www.toynami.com)

## BEBOP-A-LOO-WOP

Anime's most famous bounty hunters have become its greatest catch, too, as these *Cowboy Bebop* mini-figures. Spike, Jet, Faye, Ed, Vicious and Julia are 4 inches tall and each has a \$6.99 bounty on their head. [www.yamatotoysusa.com](http://www.yamatotoysusa.com)



## SPACE CADET

Education doesn't get much higher than a school orbiting the planet! You can't take moonbeams home in a jar, but you can take home this 7.5-inch PVC statue of *Stellvia of the Universe*'s Alisa Grenn for the out-of-this-world price tag of \$49.99. [www.maxfactory.jp](http://www.maxfactory.jp)

## THINK PINK

The favorite chew-toy of *Gravitation*'s Ryuichi has been set free on the unsuspecting American market! This full-scale 14-inch Kumagoro plush is delightfully huggable, and designed to be easy on the teeth—and at \$24.99, it's easy on the wallet, too! [www.rightstuf.com](http://www.rightstuf.com)



HOW DO YOU LIKE ME NOW, STEVE IRWIN?!



## SEE YA LATER, GATOR

We've heard of alligator-skin shoes, but this is ridiculous. Solid Snake shows off his fashion sense as the \$199.99, 12-inch *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Camo Action Figure*, and comes accessorized with a removable "croc" cap, gloves, boots, knives, guns and more, perfect for stalking

his enemies, or for a night out on the town. [www.medicomtoy.co.jp](http://www.medicomtoy.co.jp)



## MAZINKAISER? I HARDLY KNEW HER!

The newest offering from the highly-detailed "Max Gokin" toy series, the new Mazinkaiser Max Gokin Die-Cast Action Figure updates its classic look. With variant hands, removable parts and weapons on a cool base, you can blast off with one of your own for only \$125. [www.maxfactory.jp](http://www.maxfactory.jp)



## ANITA DRINK, STAT!

Real men don't mind the color pink—at least not while drinking their beverage of choice from the new frosted *ROD the TV* Anita mini-glass! Satisfy your inner thirst and your inner anime-lover for only \$6.95. [www.animegamersusa.com](http://www.animegamersusa.com)



## MAGILLA GODZILLA

Even if *Godzilla is* in his final movie (for now), we guarantee that we've not seen the last of Japan's most famous kaiju monster, as evidenced by these beautifully-detailed Godzilla 7-inch PVC figures. Invade and terrorize your own home with all three versions, for only \$19.99 each.



## TRIGUN CONTROL

As if they hadn't done enough damage the first time around, Vash the Stampede, Nicholas D. Wolfwood, Legato Bluesummers and others are back as PVC figures, based on the hot Dark Horse manga *Trigun Maximum*. These six figures are up to six inches tall and go for only \$13.99 each, so they don't do a lot of damage to your wallet. [www.yamatotoysusa.com](http://www.yamatotoysusa.com)

## GRAB SOME SKY

Fans of Square Enix's *Final Fantasy VII* videogame will be riding on cloud nine when their ship comes in—literally! The *FF7* Highwind Resin Statue is over 11 inches long, meticulously sculpted, and fully-painted for display. Despite its sky-high price tag of \$120, we guarantee this statue'll be flying off shelves. [www.kotobukiya.com](http://www.kotobukiya.com)



## THANKS JAPAN

Cool and crazy swag from overseas



### CARDBOARD HERO

The packaging says it all—"Fighting Crime in Cardboard City... Except When It's Raining!" Cardboy comes in eight different boxes, each of which can easily double as sleeping space.



### POP A CAP

Apparently the Japanese get bored while drinking soda, since they felt the need to liven up the experience with these dancing bottle caps! Inu Blue here is only one in a series of miniature entertainers.

### SUPER-SIZE DVD

If your thing is over-sized behemoths grabbing each other's loincloths, then these nifty sumo DVDs, available at convenience stores and accompanied by a delicious corn puff snack, that celebrate the sport's best bouts will rock your world.

### FULLMETAL TOILETRIES

Take Ed and Roy with you as shampoo and conditioner bottles in a handy little travel pack that warns you to have fun and remember, *no human transmutation on vacation!*



### WHEELIN' AND DEALIN'

These Japanese exclusive *Lupin the Third: Castle of Cagliostro* miniature die-cast cars prove that even Hot Wheels are cooler in Japan.

■ Summer Mullins





# CARDCAPTURED

TCG releases from both sides of the world

USA 



## DUEL MASTERS THUNDERCHARGE OF ULTRA DESTRUCTION

Long ago *Duel Masters* joined the ranks of legendary card games like *Pokemon* and *Yu-Gi-Oh!* in terms of popularity and staying power. *Thundercharge of Ultra Destruction* boosts the *Invincible Wrath* Expansion Set—which introduced the magical concept of “tapping” to the *Duel Masters* TCG world. *Thundercharge* features “energy charger” spell cards that enable a player to use a creature card like an energy card, and “stealth” cards that prevent your opponent from blocking specific categories of attack!

(July, Score, \$3.99 per pack)



## ZATCH BELL! TCG

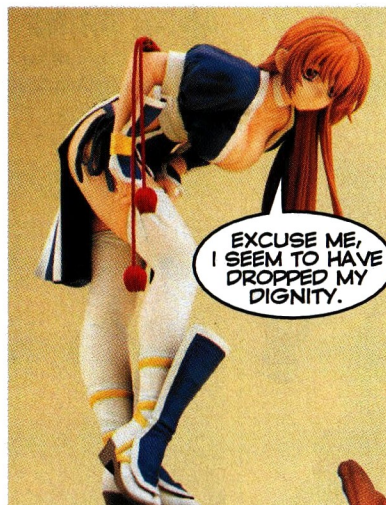
By now you might have heard of a little show called *Zatch Bell!* fresh off the boat from Japan and burning up the ratings on Cartoon Network. The titular hero Zatch is one of a hundred demons battling it out to become demon king. The starter set comes with a replica of one of the spell books from the anime that's not only cool, it's integral to the game! Players slip their cards into the book's clear sleeves and play by turning the pages to attack their opponent with spells. Simple enough for kids, colorful enough for childlike adults! (July, Bandai, \$9.99)



JAPAN 

## BLEACH SOUL CARD BATTLE

The hot anime featuring death gods ridding the unsuspecting human world of evil spirits got the TCG treatment with a special videogame tie-in. Each card is printed with a password that unlocks a special feature in the *Bleach* PSP game! The goal is to crush your opponent's Hollows (evil spirits) using the strength of your Character cards. And if you're worried about variety, so far there are two expansion sets with a third on the way! ■ SM

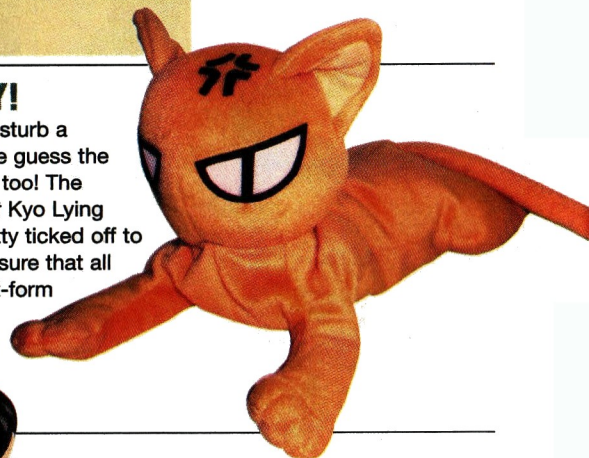


## LADY KILLER

If ninjutsu requires stealth and near-invisibility, then *Dead or Alive*'s Kasumi is the worst ninja ever, considering we can't stop looking at her. Luckily for us, the 10-inch Kasumi PVC statue is available for \$54.99, and fits perfectly on our shelf, where we can continue to keep an eye on her. [www.maxfactory.jp](http://www.maxfactory.jp)

## HELLO, KITTY!

They say to never disturb a sleeping dog, but we guess the same goes for cats, too! The \$10.99 *Fruits Basket* Kyo Lying Plush doll looks pretty ticked off to us, but we're pretty sure that all Kyo needs in his cat-form is a bowl of milk. [www.geanimation.com](http://www.geanimation.com)



## ROCK 'EM SOCK 'EM SAKURA

The 15th Anniversary *Microman Street Fighter* action figures, featuring Chun-Li and Sakura, have everything that fans could ask for, all for only \$11.99 each. Both 4-inch fighters include a special display base, variant hands and accessories, molded costumes, and most importantly, 30 articulation points for posing all your favorite moves! [www.takaratoys.co.jp](http://www.takaratoys.co.jp)



## PLUSH HOUR

Everything's going to the dogs! It's another round of *Inuyasha* plushes. These highly detailed, super-deformed dolls of Inuyasha, human Inuyasha, Sesshomaru and Kagome come with weapons and accessories, for only \$10.99-11.99 each. [www.geanimation.com](http://www.geanimation.com)





SEE YOU NEXT MONTH!

WIZARD

# anime

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# CAPSULE CORPS

Japan's gashapon may be small toys but they're big business

**T**hey might seem like simple trinkets, but they're powering an entire subculture. You see them all over anime conventions, on the Internet and in vending machines; they are *gashapon*, and they're a colossal Japanese phenomenon.

Gashapon (a word which comes from the "gasha gasha" noise the capsule toys make as they're being vended from a machine) are small figural representations of anime, manga and game characters that are a thriving industry unto themselves. Everything from *Gundam* to *Full-metal Alchemist* to *Final Fantasy* has a prominent gashapon line these days, but anything can become gashapon—from replicas of ancient weapons of the world to tiny plastic versions of dessert cakes! Generally, they come in one of two varieties: either blind-boxed "trading figures" that require you to buy again and again to collect a full set, or "capsules" that come in vending machines.

Colossal anime store chains like Animate and K-Books furnish their stores with large areas dedicated to collecting plastic. More impressive are the "Capsule Halls," which are hallways littered with literally several dozen vending machines,

and the stores dedicated to gashapon resale, like Gachapon Kaikan, a store in Japan's trendy electronics district Akihabara, which devotes five of its six floors to used gashapon (and has 300 regular gashapon machines too!).

Takamazu Kenzo, a clerk at Hobby Figure (an independent resale store also in Akihabara) claims that the trends are always changing among the dedicated

gashapon shoppers. "Gundam is always popular for us," said Kenzo, "but recently with *Gundam Seed* and *Gundam Seed Destiny* there is a lot more interest in Gundam character figures than in the robots! We sell a lot of Lacus Clyne figures!" While the market is always changing, one thing remains absolute; gashapon and trading figures aren't going away anytime soon. ■ *Zac Bertschy and Jessica Nettles*



**GASHAPON GENERATION** Above is your average scene from any given capsule hall; (left) even Kurosawa is in on the action with this trading figure Yojimbo toy!

## EAT IT

### Shirafuji Shrimp Chips

The first thing you'll notice about Shirafuji Shrimp Chips is the intense, meat-market shrimpiness that will completely overwhelm you. Then you can dig in and enjoy surprisingly subtle soy-tasting chips dusted with a light coating of shrimp powder. Not the shrimpiest thing on the planet, though.

## DRINK IT

### CC Lemon

Happy 10th anniversary, CC Lemon! Suntory's refreshing lemon soda with 600 times your RDA of vitamin C is the only beverage officially endorsed by The Simpsons in a slew of sometimes disturbing Japanese commercials! Pucker up for longer life and try not to think about Homer naked.



## WATCH IT

### Sharp V402SH Vodafone

In case you were wondering, the Japanese are still crushing us with their cellphone tech. Just flip open the SHARP V402SH, which enables you to catch live television broadcasts on a crisp LCD screen; you'll never miss *Tsubasa* again! To sweeten the deal, it also includes a 1.3 megapixel camera!



GASHAPON PHOTO BY JESSICA NETTLES



# LOCK STEP

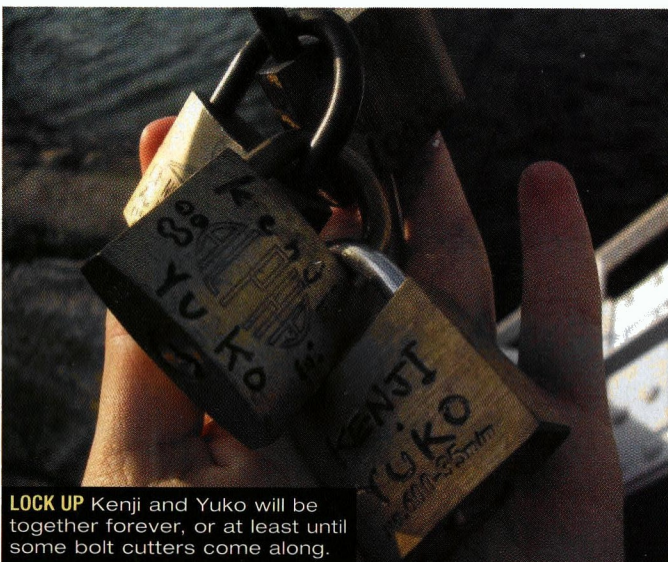
## 'Lovers' Locks' invade Japanese cities

**D**esperate for neverending love? The Japanese may have discovered the secret to everlasting romance: a padlock.

"Lovers' Locks" are a recent cultural phenomenon in Japan, having sprung up over the last three years; the basic concept is that two kids in love write their names on a padlock and then chain it to a public place. Since the padlock isn't easy to remove, it becomes an enduring symbol of love. Obviously, the easiest places to find the locks are in date spots, especially viewing platforms, bridges and railings in areas famous for beautiful scenery or romantic atmosphere.

But it's not all wine and roses, least of all for the Tokyo police, who hate the locks. They're considered an eyesore, so a squad of bicycle cops stay on the lookout, bolt cutters in hand; if your lock lasts more than 24 hours, consider yourself lucky.

"It doesn't matter to me if the police take them down," said Mayumi Arakawa, a high school freshman from the Kita-ku district. "It's the feeling behind it that matters. There are some on the fence behind the gym at my school. No one seems to have discovered them yet!" ■ ZB & JN



**LOCK UP** Kenji and Yuko will be together forever, or at least until some bolt cutters come along.

## JPN101

Learn Japanese (slowly)



**ATSUI** [at-soo-ee] adj. Hot. A beloved musician was once heard to remark, "Drop it like it's *atsui*."

**BARA** [bah-rah] n. Volleyball. Most commonly played by girls in revealing swimwear who nevertheless get mad at you for finding them attractive.

**HAMA** [ha-mah] n. The beach. Strangely enough, Japanese people go to the beach in the summertime.

**HANABI** [ha-nah-bee] n. Fireworks, routinely seen at the end of a summer festival.

**MATSURI** [mat-soo-ree] n. Festival. Summertime festivals are popular and very common in Japan.

**NATSU** [nat-soo] n. Summertime. You know, that big space in between the last semester and the first semester.

**SEMI** [seh-mee] n. Cicada. The Japanese very strongly associate the noise a cicada makes with the summertime, since that's when they return.

**SUIKA** [soo-ee-kah] n. Watermelon, the most beloved and popular summertime fruit.

**SUIKAWARI** [soo-ee-kah-wah-ree] n. Traditional Japanese beach game where a blindfolded person tries to split a watermelon with a stick. Somewhat messy, but also delicious.

**UMI** [ooh-mee] n. The sea (not the ocean).

**YUKATA** [yoo-kah-tah] n. A lightweight, summertime kimono, worn at summer festivals.

**YASUMI** [yah-soo-mee] n. Vacation.

## TOKYOTRAVELOGUE

### Tokyo Tower

There are a horde of symbols that define Japanese culture both past and present, but when you're debating the biggest visual icon in Japan's capital city, there's no way you can ignore Tokyo Tower.

And you really can't miss it—at 333 meters high, smack in the middle of Minato Ward (in close proximity to the Imperial Palace), it edges out its earlier inspiration, the Eiffel Tower, by nine spiteful meters, and thus continues to reign as the world's tallest self-supporting steel tower. It's a source of pride for most Tokyo-ites, and an otaku favorite: it was sucker-punched in manga series *Geobreeders*, served as a center of paranormal activity in the pages of *Tokyo Babylon*, and also popped up in *Sailor Moon*, *Card Captor Sakura*, *X*, *Magic Knight Rayearth*, *Angelic Layer* and *Burn Up Excess*.

But Tokyo Tower wasn't raised just for destruction. The obelisk was built in 1958 by designers Nikken Sekkei Ltd. to serve as a broadcasting tower for owners Nippon Television City Corp. It has an average 2.6 million visitors per year, and has been romantically illuminated at night for enamored couples, young and old alike, since 1989. ■ *Andrez Bergen*







IF I HAD ARMS,  
THAT CHEESE  
PLATTER OVER  
THERE WOULD  
BE *HISTORY*.

## partingshot

**T**o find a "Parting Shot" worthy of our first monthly issue, we had to turn to Japan's pop empress, Hello Kitty. This statue—called Hello de Milo (based on ancient Greece's famous Venus de Milo statue)—was made by famed American fashion designer Jeremy Scott as part of the madness of her 30th anniversary last year, when Hello de Milo and nearly 60 other Kitty-based works were made for a special art exhibition that's still touring Japan. We've got even money that a Hello Kitty-headed, full-size replica of the Statue of Liberty will be standing mouthlessly in Tokyo Bay next year, bearing the sign "Only the cute shall pass." ■ *Robert Bricken*



Life  
Death  
Honor



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The Legendary Epic Reborn

Available on DVD August 23, 2005



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